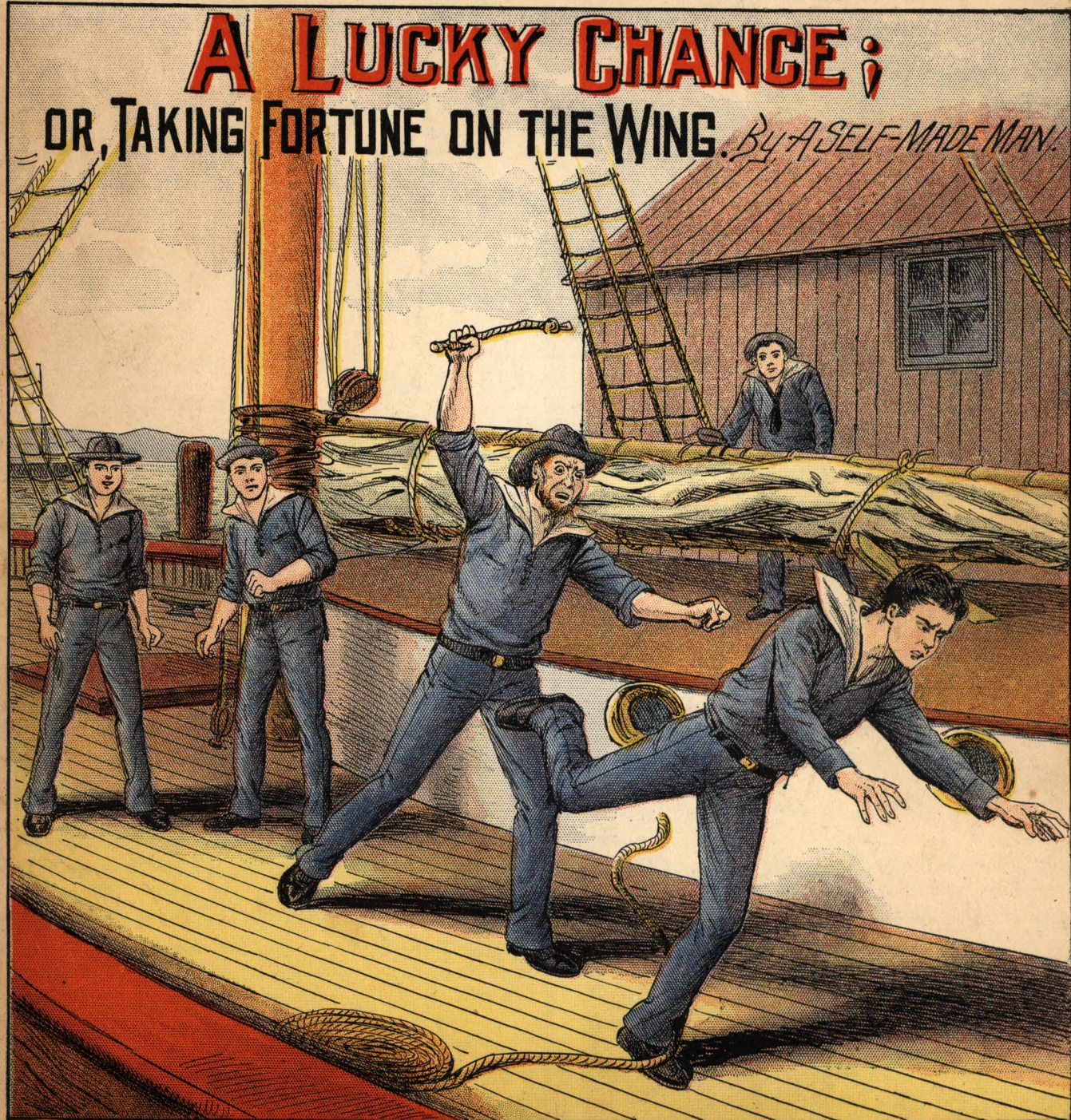


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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.



The furious mate made a rush for Tom, and the boy fled. Unluckily his foot caught in a piece of rope, tripping him, and he fell heavily to the deck. A yell of exultation escaped Hawley as he pounced upon the boy.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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A LUCKY CHANCE

OR,

TAKING FORTUNE ON THE WING

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

TOM WHITNEY AND CAPTAIN KEDGE.

"So ye want to ship aboard the Polly Ann for the season, do ye, Tom Whitney?" bellowed Captain Kedge, glowering upon the boy with his sinister, steely blue eyes. "Think ye'd like to learn mackerel-catchin', eh?"

The Captain was standing before the door of his cottage, which was situated on the brow of an elevation overlooking Gloucester harbor, with his ponderous legs spread out like a pair of dividers, and his rough, horny hands clasped behind his broad back.

He had a black sou'wester on, and his big face was mahogany colored and bearded.

Everybody in town knew Captain Nat Kedge, who owned the schooner Polly Ann, had an interest in half a dozen other fishing vessels, and owned several cottages in the town as well, but nobody really liked the man, for he was rough in his manners, outspoken, sometimes to an offensive degree, in his conversation, and was without an ounce of consideration for a tenant who was behind in his rent, or a member of his crew who incurred his displeasure.

There were other reasons, too, why Tom Whitney should have considered him the last captain to apply to for a job; but for reasons of his own the boy had brushed them aside and had called that bright, sunny spring morning at the Kedge cottage and asked the skipper for employment.

"I've got to turn my hand at something, sir," replied

the lad, in answer to the Captain's not over-friendly observation, "now that father is dead and mother has only me to depend on. I'd rather stick to the water—seeing that I'm used to it, having worked up and down the coast aboard the sloop for the last year with father—than tackle anything ashore. I'm willing to go for half a share——"

"Oh, ye are?" replied Captain Kedge, sarcastically.

"I suppose that's about all you'd consider me worth until I got the knack of handling the seine and the fish. As for doing my share of working the schooner, I'm sure I can hold my own with any one 'round Glo'ster."

"Ye mean ye think ye kin," grinned the skipper, with a malevolent look in his eyes. "I've heard lubbers like you talk that way afore."

"I'm not a lubber, sir," answered Tom, with a trace of indignation in his voice. "Father said——"

"I don't keer what your father said," snorted Captain Kedge. "There's a heap of diff'rence 'tween what ye did aboard the sloop and what ye'll be called on to do aboard the Polly Ann, if so be ye are ready to ship and I'm willin' to take ye."

"I know that, sir, and I'm ready——"

"Ye know it, do ye?" and the Captain grinned again, more maliciously than before. "Well, if ye know it, then ye won't have no cause to complain if ye don't find everythin' to your likin' when ye get out'n blue water. Mackerel-catchin' ain't no kid-glove business—I reckon you understand that. It's a hard life and one full of chances. Every man may have a hundred dollars to his credit afore the

first week is out, and then ag'in we may cruise a month and not make enough to pay for our ice. Ye'll find plenty of work, and hard work at that, my cock robin. And there's perils waitin' on every minute of the night and day. They come when ye least expect 'em. Does yer mother know that ye've come to me on this errand?"

The speaker looked hard at the boy, with a curious expression in his face.

"No. I thought I'd see you first."

"I s'pose ye've tried other skippers afore ye came to me?"

"Several; but I was late in making application, so there was no opening."

"Ye need the money, I dare say, or ye wouldn't have come to me at all?"

The boy was silent.

"Why did ye think there was a chance for ye or any one else on the Polly Ann, when she's got her ice aboard and liable to be off at the next flood?"

"I heard that Ned Brown——"

Captain Kedge ripped out an oath.

"The blessed varmint deserted at the last minute. Ye heard that, did ye?" said the skipper, savagely.

"I only heard that he'd left and gone to Boston," replied Tom, quietly.

"It won't be healthy for him if I ever set my hands on him, I kin tell ye that. He signed for the season, the villain, and after reportin' for duty, and puttin' in the best part of a day, the first thing my mate, Buck Hawley, tells me is that he managed to get his dunnage and bolted. So ye are lookin' for his place, Tom Whitney, eh? Ye look strong and hearty, and I dare say I might strain a pint and take ye, if so be it your mother is willin'. But, bear in mind, ye mustn't expect no favors aboard the Polly Ann."

"I'm not asking for any favors, Cap'n Kedge," replied the boy, somewhat proudly. "All I want is a square deal."

The Captain leered in an unpleasant way when he replied:

"Ye'll get a square deal if ye deserve it. But if ye go for to cut up any monkey-shines ye'll wish ye'd never been born—by the Lord Harry, ye will."

Most boys would have thought twice after Captain Kedge's words about signing with him, for there was a sinister import about his remarks that promised unpleasant conditions; but Tom Whitney took the implied threat lightly.

He was thoroughly convinced in his own mind that he would be able to make good aboard the Polly Ann, and therefore he did not anticipate trouble.

It is true he had heard a whole lot about the Captain's methods, but he could not bring himself to believe that one-half of the stories were true.

Of course, he would have preferred to serve under another skipper if he could have got the chance.

Harry was a well-built young fellow, of sixteen or thereabouts, with clear-cut, resolute features, lightly touched with sea-tan, dark eyes, and crisp hair, cut short.

His athletic frame was set off to excellent advantage by

a suit of comparatively new store clothes that fitted him to a nicety.

His father, the late Captain Joel Whitney, had been in the coasting trade between Boston and various down-east ports, and Tom had served about a year's apprenticeship aboard the sloop Martha Perkins.

The widow had sold this craft, and the good-will of her husband's trade, to a Gloucester man, who had rechristened her the Sally Peasley.

When Mrs. Whitney was Martha Perkins, one of the prettiest girls of Gloucester, her most persistent admirers were Joel Whitney, an enterprising young fellow of twenty-six, and Nat Kedge, a man of thirty, who had just pushed himself to the fore as mate of a Gloucester trawler.

Miss Perkins was won by Joel Whitney, and Nat Kedge never forgave his successful rival, though there was no open rupture between them.

During the eighteen years of Whitney's married life he was more or less handicapped by adverse circumstances, while Nat Kedge, on the contrary, was uniformly prosperous.

The larger part of Martha Perkins's friends therefore believed she made the mistake of her life when she turned Nat down for the handsomer and younger Joel.

"Am I to understand that you will take me if my mother is willing?" asked Tom Whitney, after Captain Kedge's last remark.

"Yes," nodded the skipper, with a curious look in his eyes, "I'll take ye. Ye kin tell your mother that I'll make a sailor and a fisherman of ye for old time's sake."

"I'll tell her," replied the boy; "and I'm much obliged to you, Captain Kedge, for the chance."

"Ye're welcome. By the way, I hear there's a mortgage on your cottage. Eight or nine hundred dollars, ain't it?"

"Yes," answered Tom, a cloud coming over his face.

"Held by Ed'ard Flint?"

The boy nodded.

"Ye kin tell your mother I'm thinkin' of buyin' it."

"Buying the mortgage, sir?" exclaimed Tom, in surprise.

"Why not? It ain't the first I've bought, nor mebbe will it be the last. I'm makin' money, year in and year out. I don't keer to have it lie idle in the bank. I own six houses already, boy, if ye want to know, and I hold mortgages on six others. The Polly Ann earned all them for me, and an interest on four more smacks that sail out'r Glo'ster harbor. Ye kin tell your mother that, too, if ye've a mind to, though I dare say she knows it already, for a man can't shake his foot ashore but every one hears about it. Mebbe I'll call on your mother this arternoon, if Deacon Flint and me comes to terms over that mortgage. In the meantime, if ye're goin' on the schooner ye want to shake a leg, for we sail at the first of the flood in the mornin'. I'll send word to Hawley that he may look for ye along in the arternoon. Ye'll find the Polly at Carpenter's Dock till five o'clock, when she'll pull out in the harbor. Ye kin go now and fix it up with your mother."

Thus speaking, Captain Kedge turned on his heel and

entered his house, one he had foreclosed upon and bought in from an unlucky mortgagor, while Tom Whitney hurried toward his mother's humble cottage to get her consent to his shipping on the Polly Ann.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW OF CAPTAIN KEDGE FALLS ON THE WHITNEY COTTAGE.

Mrs. Joel Whitney was still a good-looking woman at thirty-seven, and her widow's weeds did not in the least detract from her personal appearance.

She was in the kitchen preparing dinner when Tom hurried into the house.

"Where is mother?" asked the boy of his sister Ruth, who was a delicate girl, and consequently unable to do much toward the support of the family.

"In the kitchen. What's the matter, Tom? You look excited, asked Ruth, with a curiosity natural under the circumstances.

"You'll know by and by, Ruth," replied the lad, as he hurried out of the sunny sitting and dining room into the short passage which led to the one-story addition used as the kitchen.

"Mother," cried Tom, eagerly, "I've as good as shipped for the mackerel season. All I need is your permission, and then I'll put my signature to the articles."

The widow's smile at the appearance of her stalwart son, whom she almost idolized, vanished at his words, and a troubled look came into her face.

"I was in hopes you'd given the idea up when you found that all the vessels had shipped a full crew for the season. How did it happen that you have found an opening at the last moment?"

"I heard this morning that Ned Brown, who signed with Captain Kedge——"

"Captain Kedge!" gasped the little woman, with an indescribable look in her eyes. "You don't mean to say that——"

"Yes, mother; I mean to say that he has agreed to take me in place of Ned Brown, who, it appears, deserted yesterday from the Polly Ann and has gone to Boston."

"Did Captain Kedge ask you to go?" she asked, in a hushed tone.

"No, mother. I called to see him at his house and put the proposition to him myself. He didn't seem over-anxious at first to take me, but later on he said if you were willing he'd ship me, and make a sailor and a fisherman of me for old time's sake."

"For old time's sake?" repeated Mrs. Whitney, in a low tone.

"Yes, mother, those were his words. He also told me he was thinking of buying the mortgage Mr. Flint holds on our cottage. He seems to have money to burn. He told me to tell you he would probably call on you this afternoon if he and Mr. Flint came to terms."

The little widow changed color and placed her hand on her heart.

The news did not seem pleasant to her.

"Well, mother, what do you say? Shall I report aboard of the Polly Ann this afternoon? I haven't more than time to get my duds together after dinner and buy a number of things that are absolutely necessary. The schooner will trip her anchor at the first of the flood to-morrow morning."

"I don't like you to go, Tom," said the little woman, wistfully.

"Neither am I anxious to leave you and Ruth, even for a week, which may be the extent of our first trip, if the Polly's usual luck stands by her; but I don't see how I can better myself, nor do anywhere near as well. Last season the crew of the smack made one hundred and forty dollars apiece on their first trip, and the Polly wasn't away a full week. Now, with similar luck I'd be entitled to half that amount, or seventy dollars. Think of that, mother! Seventy dollars would be a godsend to us now."

"It would, indeed. I could pay the interest on the mortgage and meet my bills."

"Of course you could. And Ruth could give up embroidering those infant socks she receives from Boston, which pay so little and are so trying on her eyes. Then there's the rest of the season to be heard from," continued Tom, enthusiastically. "I ought to make three hundred dollars altogether. That would put us on easy street and give me a chance to look around for something else."

"I wish it was any other vessel than the Polly Ann," said Mrs. Whitney, with an ominous shake of her head. "I've heard pretty hard things about the way the men are treated aboard of her sometimes."

"So have I, mother, but I don't take much stock in those stories. Most of the crew who go out this season have sailed with Cap'n Kedge before, and he couldn't hold one of them longer than they stepped ashore if he didn't handle them white. The men of Glo'ster, mother, are not slaves, these days, at any rate."

The little widow shook her head doubtfully.

"Your father has told me more than once that Captain Kedge carried a high hand at sea, and his mate is worse."

"Most cap'n's rule with few words, and they're usually to the point. They don't stop to choose their language, either. When a chap tries to shirk his duty he must expect to be handled without gloves. It is possible Cap'n Kedge has had a good many such fellows to deal with, and I guess he shows them little mercy. A man who knows his business, and lives up to it, gets a pretty square deal, as a rule. I think it's a case of 'give a dog a bad name and it will stick to him' with Cap'n Kedge. He couldn't keep good men if he didn't treat them right, and he couldn't make the successful hauls he does right along unless he had good men. It stands to reason, then, that the skipper of the Polly Ann can't be as bad as he's painted," said Tom, with a sort of triumphant wag of his head.

The boy's argument was good, but for all that the little woman was not convinced.

Still, she thought that her old suitor would treat her boy well for her sake, especially as he had hinted as much.

To say the truth, she did not care to have the Captain

call on her; neither was she particularly pleased to learn that Captain Kedge proposed to purchase the mortgage on the cottage from Mr. Flint, the mortgagee, for she feared he had some other purpose in view than merely to invest his surplus capital.

Tom, having won his mother's reluctant consent to his shipping on board of the Polly Ann, went into the sitting-room to wait till dinner was ready and to break the news to Ruth.

"Oh, Tom, are you really going mackerel-catching?" the girl asked him, almost tearfully.

"That's what I am, Ruth," he answered cheerfully.

"We shall be so lonesome, mother and I, without you. How long do you expect to be away?"

"It is uncertain. Possibly a week, but more likely ten days, or even a fortnight. Some smacks have been out three weeks or a month before they made their haul."

"How much do you expect to get in the way of wages?"

"The business of fishing is conducted upon the system of shares. That is, half the value of the catch, after outfitting expenses have been deducted, goes to the owner of the vessel and half to the crew. Although the skipper and cook are not required to take part in the actual business of fishing, each of them receives a full share. The cap'n gets, in addition, four per cent. of the value of the catch, and the cook has regular wages."

"What does the load of fish usually bring?"

"That depends altogether on the market, Ruth. The first catch of the season is usually the most profitable one, as they are generally packed in ice and carried into the market fresh. Last year the Polly Ann's first trip netted over three thousand dollars in bulk. After expenses had been taken out, and Cap'n Kedge had taken his four per cent. rake-off and his half as owner, the full shares amounted to one hundred and forty dollars per man of the crew. As I'm not an experienced hand at fishing, I've agreed to go out for half rates. I expect to make anywhere from forty to seventy dollars on the first trip."

"As much as that?" exclaimed the girl, to whom such sums seemed almost princely in the family's straitened circumstances.

"Yes, as much as that," nodded Tom, confidently.

"It's a lot of money," replied Ruth.

"To us, yes."

"It's a good deal of money to make, anyway, in a week, or ten days, or even two weeks."

"A chap earns it, all right, for it's tough work. It will be harder on me, as I'm a greenhorn at it."

"When are you going away?"

"I shall report aboard the Polly this afternoon some time."

"Are you going with Captain Kedge?" asked Ruth, opening her eyes.

"I am."

"Did you tell mother so?"

"Yes."

"And does she approve——"

"She isn't over-anxious for me to go, anyway, and I guess she'd rather I'd not go out with the Cap'n, but it's the only chance I have. I must either take it or look for something else. As we need money badly, I'd be a fool to turn down a money-maker because people say the skipper is a hard man to work for."

Ruth remained silent and went on with her embroidery work.

The conversation, however, was not renewed, as Mrs. Whitney presently put the dinner on the table, and after Tom had eaten all he wanted he went out to make some purchases for his trip to the mackerel grounds.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPUNKY MISS WILSON.

When Tom got his duds packed in a small sea chest which had belonged to his father he started out to make one call.

He wanted to say good-bye to Amy Wilson, a pretty, golden-haired miss, a friend of his sister's, with whom he was quite chummy.

Her father was captain of a three-masted schooner that carried lumber from a Maine port to Boston and New York.

The Wilsons lived in a pretty cottage not far from the bay.

Amy's mother had sent her to a store in the neighborhood on an errand, and she was returning home when she met Dave Hawley, son of the Polly Ann's mate, a boy for whom she entertained a great dislike.

Dave, on the contrary, was much impressed by Amy's good looks and sprightly ways, and he took advantage of every opportunity to seek her company.

He was a big lout of a boy, strong and muscular, but not active.

He had sandy hair and sallow skin, and if he had ever had any good looks they had been spoiled by an attack of the smallpox, which left his face full of shallow indentations.

He didn't seem to have sense enough to see that his attentions were unwelcome to Amy; or, if he did, he had nerve enough to persevere where he was not wanted.

"Hello, Amy," he said, with a grin, planting his burly frame in front of her. "I'm goin' sailin'. Don't you want to come along?"

"No," replied Amy, decidedly. "I don't."

"Why not?"

"I don't care to go sailing. I am in a hurry to get home, so please let me pass."

"Ho! You ain't in no hurry," grinned Dave. "I seen you comin' along for a block, and you was takin' it as easy as could be. Say, why can't you be friendly with a fellow? You know I like you. You kin go sailin' with me just as well as you kin with Tom Whitney. I seen him take you out t'other afternoon."

"Suppose he did? I can choose my company, can't I?" she replied, with considerable spirit.

"Do you mean to say I ain't as good company as him?" snarled Dave, his protruding eyes snapping spitefully.

"I don't see that it's necessary for me to offer any explanation of my actions to you, David Hawley," flashed the girl, in no uncertain tones.

"Oh, you don't, eh? I s'pose I ain't good enough for you 'cause we don't live in a nice white cottage with green blinds like you. Well, I want you to know that my old man is just as well off as yours, and mebbe better."

"That has nothing to do with it," she replied.

"Then why don't you let me keep company with you if I want to? What do you want to go with Tom Whitney for? His old woman ain't worth a cent. Old Man Flint has a mortgage on their house, and it won't be long, I guess, afore they're sold out, bag and baggage. I hope it'll be soon," he added spitefully.

"You wicked boy, how dare you talk that way!" cried Amy, wrathfully.

"'Cause it suits me to. I hate Tom Whitney, and one of these days I'll punch his head for him."

"I'm much obliged to you, Hawley, for your kind intentions," spoke up another voice at this juncture, "but if you punch my head it'll be when I'm asleep."

Dave Hawley and Amy Wilson both turned around and found themselves face to face with Tom Whitney.

"Oh, Tom!" exclaimed Amy, her pretty face wreathed in smiles, "I'm so glad to see you."

"And I'm glad to see you, Amy. Going home?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll go with you, if you don't mind."

"I shall be delighted to have you do so. Mother was speaking about you this morning."

As Dave listened to this brief interchange of talk between the girl he was soft on and his "hated rival" his face grew as dark as a thunder-cloud.

Then he recollected the answer Tom had given to his aggressive remark and he grew white with rage.

"You think I can't punch your head, do you?" he roared. "I kin wipe the ground with you, and that's what I'm goin' to do. You've been puttin' things into this here girl's head ag'in me, that's what you have. She wouldn't treat me the way she done now if you hadn't. I kin lick you with one hand, and I'm goin' to do it right now."

"You're going to do nothing of the kind, David Hawley," cried Amy, stepping between the boys.

"Who's goin' to stop me?" he asked sneeringly, as he began to roll up his sleeves.

"I am," she answered.

"Amy, please stand aside," said Tom, quietly. "I'm not afraid of Hawley carrying out his threat. I am able to defend myself."

"I won't permit you two boys to fight here on the street," she replied, pluckily. "Turn down your sleeves again, sir," she added, looking Dave full in the face.

Hawley hesitated and glared at Tom, who had stepped out from behind the girl and appeared ready to face the issue.

"Do as I tell you!" cried the spunky girl, stamping her foot.

"I'll do it for you, Amy, 'cause I like you," said Dave, reluctantly rolling down his sleeves; "but just wait till I ketch him alone, that's all."

With a look of malice at Tom, Hawley turned on his heel and walked off down the street, muttering threats under his breath.

Tom laughed, for now that it was over the affair looked rather ridiculous to him.

"I never thought you were such a spunky girl, Amy," he said, with a smile. "Why, your eyes actually flashed fire."

"Did they?" she laughed, the heightened color gradually fading from her face.

"Sure. S'pose he had refused to do as you wanted—did you mean to pitch into him yourself? You looked almost mad enough to do it."

"Hardly that, Tom," smiled the girl. "I'm afraid you must think me very unladylike. But if you only knew how he provoked me before you came. I can't bear the sight of that boy, and yet he's always forcing himself upon me. If he speaks to me again I shall certainly tell him in a very few words what I think of him."

"And if he tries to do as he threatened a moment ago he may find I'm a tougher proposition than he figures on," grinned Tom.

"I do hope that you won't have any trouble with him, Tom," said Amy, a bit anxiously.

"I'm not likely to for some little time, as I expect to leave Glo'ster early in the morning."

"Leave Glo'ster early in the morning!" exclaimed the girl in surprise.

"Yes. I'm going mackerel fishing this season on the Polly Ann."

"Are you, really?"

"I am, really. I was on my way to say good-bye to you when I saw you talking to Dave Hawley."

"You won't be away over a week or two at a time, will you?"

"I hope not."

"Well, that's better than if you were going to Boston or somewhere else, to remain away for months. Your mother and sister will miss you greatly."

"They're bound to do that. You must go and see them as often as you can. You'll do that, won't you, Amy?"

"Why, of course I will."

Tom walked to the Wilson cottage, and Amy persuaded him to come in a few minutes to see her mother.

He stayed a short time, then bade mother and daughter good-bye and returned home to see if his chest had been taken down to the schooner.

He found that it had.

Half an hour later he left the house, after a tearful parting with his mother and sister, and started for Carpenter's Wharf, where the Polly Ann had been taking on her ice.

He met Captain Kedge coming up the street.

"Ye are goin' aboard the schooner, I s'pose?" said the skipper, eying the boy keenly. "Ye've got your mother's permission, then?"

"I have, Cap'n," replied Tom, respectfully, for the skipper now stood in a new light to him.

"I thought probably ye'd come, so I sent word to Hawley that ye'd report afore the schooner hauled out from the dock."

The Captain turned away and continued on up the street.

Tom watched him and saw him turn in through the gate of his own home.

"I guess he's bought the mortgage," thought the boy, continuing on toward the wharf.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SET-TO IN THE FORECASTLE.

The schooner Polly Ann lay alongside Carpenter's Wharf, and when Tom stepped on her deck he asked for Hawley, who acted in the capacity of a mate.

"You'll find him for'ard in the fok's'l," replied one of the crew, named Gideon Bates, who was coiling a rope abaft the mizzenmast.

Accordingly Tom walked forward, and, coming to a scuttle opening, descended a short flight of steps and found himself in the smack's fore-castle, in which several of the crew slept, and in which were also the cook stove and mess table.

Back of it were the pantry and storeroom, in which were ten fresh-water tanks.

Still further aft was the hold, divided into pens by partitions of rough boards.

These were now filled with ice, but later would be used for fish.

Abaft the hold was the cabin, in which Captain Kedge, Buck Hawley and four of the crew found sleeping quarters.

It was neatly finished in ash, and running along three sides of it was a broad transom that served as a seat.

The only furniture was a small coal stove, securely fastened in the middle of the floor.

On the walls hung a clock, a barometer and a thermometer, while a few charts were stowed overhead in a rack.

When Tom Whitney stepped below, Buck Hawley, who was helping Jed Parsons, the cook, or "doctor," as the crew called him, fix one of the feet of the stove, which had worked loose, uttered a volley of oaths and sprang to his feet.

Jed had accidentally lost his grip on the stove and it had severely bruised the mate's fingers.

A smothered laugh drew Tom's attention in another direction, and there, greatly to his surprise and disgust, he saw Dave Hawley seated on one of the bunks, watching the proceedings with no little interest.

Tom had seen the mate on several occasions before, but he never looked quite so burly and savage-looking as he did now, standing in the dimly lighted fore-castle, caressing his injured digits.

At that moment his gaze rested on Tom.

"Well, what do you want?" he snapped out, his surly eyes taking in the boy from head to foot.

"Cap'n Kedge told me to report to you," began the lad.

"So you're Tom Whitney, are you?" growled the mate. "You're the chap that's sneaked into the berth my boy Dave ought to have."

"What do you mean?" asked Tom, in surprise.

Before Buck Hawley could open his mouth again, his son, livid with rage, jumped from his seat on the bunk and came forward.

"Blast your eyes, Tom Whitney," he roared furiously, shaking his fist in Tom's face, "what do you mean by gettin' me out of the Polly Ann?"

"I wasn't aware that you had any connection with the schooner," replied Tom, coolly.

"You know'd I meant to go out this trip in Ned Brown's place, and you went and done me out of the job."

"I didn't know anything about it," replied Tom. "I heard this morning that Brown had thrown up his berth and I called at Cap'n Kedge's house and asked him to give me the place. That's all there is to it."

"I s'pose you expect me to b'lieve that?" snarled Dave.

"I don't care whether you believe it or not," replied Tom, independently.

Dave uttered a howl of anger and made a sudden lunge at Whitney's head.

Tom ducked and jumped aside to avoid another blow.

"Slug him, Dave!" cried his father, with an ugly grin. "There's no one to stop you."

Tom heard the elder Hawley's remark, and he prepared to defend himself.

"Confound your hide!" shouted Dave, tearing off his jacket. "I said I'd lick you, and I'm goin' to do it. I've got you where I want you now."

Tom made no reply, but watched his big adversary narrowly.

Our hero was not the least bit afraid of the mate's son, although the fellow looked to be twice as strong as himself.

Tom had taken a course of lessons in the art of self-defense from an ex-prize-fighter, and consequently was something of an expert with his fists.

Then, what he lacked in strength he more than made up in quickness, for he was as agile as a cat on his feet.

Unless Dave succeeded in closing with him he had no fear of the result, for he knew that his opponent was an unskilful slugger and slow as molasses.

Breathing threats of what he was going to do to Tom, the mate's son, encouraged by the other's first drawback, began business by smashing at Tom's face.

At least, that was his intention, but it failed because the boy ducked in the nick of time, and, taking advantage of Dave's unprotected face, handed him out an uppercut that landed on his enemy's jaw with force enough to set his teeth rattling like a castanet.

For a moment Dave was staggered with surprise, and Tom might have followed up his attack with advantage, but disdained to do so.

The fellow roared with rage the moment he recovered and rushed at Tom with blood in his eyes, only to receive a clout in the mouth that brought him all up, standing with his arms swinging in the air.

Tom's successful resistance only served to make Dave more furious.

He made another rush at our hero, fully resolved to annihilate him on the spot.

Tom side-stepped and smashed him twice in rapid succession in the right eye.

Buck Hawley looked on in amazement.

He had supposed his son able to do up the new member of the crew in short order, and now the boot seemed to be on the other leg.

He was so angry that he made a pass at Tom himself.

His ponderous fist glanced off the lad's head and struck the stove a whack that jarred it out of position.

The iron cut his knuckles to the bone, and he swore like a trooper.

Tom, thoroughly angry at the blow he had received from the mate, and aroused by a whack in the chest he got from his antagonist, began to mix things up in earnest with Dave.

It was whack, biff, smash, every stroke counting on young Hawley's face.

He tried to ward the jolts off, but they seemed to come from every quarter, until he was fairly dazed by the shower of blows.

With a howl of pain and fury he bent down his head and butted at Tom like a wild bull.

In his blind rage he mistook the stove for his opponent and struck it with such force as to demolish it completely.

Then he pitched forward on the fore-castle deck and lay there, half-stunned.

Buck Hawley, seeing his son practically knocked out, uttered another string of oaths and started for Tom to wreak vengeance on him.

The boy jumped lightly out of the way and darted up the steps to the deck.

The mate in attempting to follow him got tangled up in the wreck of the cook-stove and went down on all fours.

His remarks for the next minute were so expressive that Jed Parsons got out of the fore-castle himself as soon as he could.

He found Tom standing in the sun, rubbing his bruised knuckles with his handkerchief.

"Better keep out of sight, my lad," the cook said warningly, "until Buck gets over his tantrums, or he'll make mincemeat of you."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the mate came tearing up the fore-castle steps.

His face was livid with rage.

He stood for a moment blinking in the face of the declining sun, trying to locate the boy.

At length he spied him, just as the lad started to go aft.

The furious mate made a rush for Tom and the boy fled.

Unluckily his foot caught in a piece of rope, tripping him, and he fell heavily to the deck.

A yell of exultation escaped Hawley as he pounced upon the boy.

CHAPTER V.

THE IRON HAND OF CAPTAIN KEDGE.

"I've got you, you cantankerous little monkey!" he roared violently. "You'll steal my boy's berth, eh? And you'll try to escape the thrashin' he owes you, will you? I'm goin' to mop the deck with you and then toss you and your dunnage onto the dock."

Buck Hawley was fully able to carry out his threat.

He was a violent and unreasonable man when aroused, and the only person who could control him aboard the schooner was Captain Kedge himself.

Fortunately for Tom, the skipper stepped on board at that moment.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, with a frown. "What does this mean? What are ye doin' to the lad, Hawley? Let him up, d'ye hear?"

The mate recognized the Captain's voice, and he reluctantly released the boy.

"What's wrong 'tween you two?" demanded Captain Kedge, as Hawley and Tom got on their feet.

"He's taken my boy's place aboard this schooner," replied the mate, sulkily.

"Who says he has?" from the skipper.

"I say so," answered Hawley.

"Then ye say what isn't true, d'ye understand?"

"I asked you to give my boy a chance in Brown's place."

"I know you did."

"And you'd have done it only for this young puppy."

"Ye seem to know all about it, Buck Hawley," said Captain Kedge, sarcastically.

"I reckon you'd have done that much for me, seein' I'm your mate, and have been so these three year."

"Mate, are ye? Well, p'raps ye are, after a fashion; but that don't give ye the privilege of expectin' more'n is your due. If I wanted your son aboard the Polly I'd have spoken to ye about him. But I don't want him. He's no good for my business, nor never will be."

"Why isn't he?" snorted Hawley. "Isn't he as strong as any man aboard?"

Captain Kedge grinned sardonically.

"Wouldn't he make two of that young whippersnapper you've hired in Brown's place? Wouldn't he, I say?"

"Look ye here, Buck Hawley," said the skipper, in a threatening way. "I've taken more back talk from ye over this matter than I'd stand from the whole crew together. Ye ought to know me by this time. I'm cap'n of this smack, and owner to boot. I hire a crew to suit myself, and if ye ain't satisfied, Hawley, ye kin take your traps and go ashore this minute. I want ye to understand that Tom Whitney sails in this craft as ord'nary seaman in place of Ned Brown. What I say I gen'rally mean. Now

go for'ard and attend to your duty, and don't let me hear another whisper out of ye on the subject."

"It's easy to see why you've taken a fancy to that monkey," snarled Hawley, forgetful in his disappointment and anger of the unwisdom of his remark. "You've got your eye cocked on his mother."

Smash!

Quick as a flash of lightning Captain Kedge raised his hairy fist and smote his mate to the deck.

Tom was astonished at the swiftness and completeness of that blow.

It was as if a sledgehammer had come in contact with Hawley's head.

He lay for several moments like a dazed man, while the skipper stood over him with a look on his face that was terrible in its wrath.

Then the mate picked himself up, and without another word staggered toward the forecabin.

Captain Kedge swung around and faced the boy.

"There's a lesson for ye, Tom Whitney," he said meaningly. "I am cap'n of this schooner. Do your duty and ye are safe. But if I ketch ye tryin' to shirk your fair share of work, by the Lord Harry ye'll hear from me in a way ye won't like."

With those words Captain Kedge turned on his heel and went down into his cabin.

"If you're wise, young man, you'll take the hint," said Gideon Bates in Tom's ear.

"As far as doing my duty right up to the handle is concerned he shall have no fault to find with me," replied the boy.

"Then you'll get along all right. The skipper is the roughest man in all Glo'ster, but he's square as a die to those that do the right thing. I've sailed with him three seasons, and I ain't got a kick comin'. I've caught it hot once or twice, but I'll allow I deserved it. He ain't infallible, but generally he's right. If you catch a clout alongside the jaw some day or night, kind of sudden-like, when you're standin' your trick at the wheel, you may know that you've allowed your attention to wander and the hooker is a bit off her course. He may be below, but he knows the moment you're not steerin' true. Then the first thing you know he's alongside of you. He talks oftener with his hand than his mouth, so if you know what's good for you you'll take the hint I'm givin' you."

"I'm much obliged to you for putting me wise to the situation, and I'll keep my weather eye lifting when I'm on duty," said Tom. "I suppose you know my name is Tom Whitney. What's yours?"

"Gideon Bates, called Gid for short. That was Jed Parsons, the doctor, who warned you against Hawley when you came out of the fok's'l. The other chaps will introduce themselves when they run athwart you. You'll find them all right. I warn you, however, to steer clear of the mate. He's got it in for you and will watch his chance to get back at you. Give him a wide berth whenever you can."

"I will, though I'm not afraid of him," replied Tom, resolutely.

"He isn't to be depended on, and may strike you in the dark. The skipper won't stand for any crooked work, but he can't be expected to see everything that might happen aboard. Here comes that chap's son. Looks as if he'd been wrastlin' with a wild bull. Did you and he have a run-in below?"

"Yes, and I would have polished him off if the stove hadn't taken the job out of my hands."

"You must be a right good one with your fists if you can whip him," said Gid, admiringly, as Dave stepped sullenly onto the wharf and walked away.

"He has nothing but brute strength, and is dead slow, while I have science and speed, and that counts every time."

"I guess it does. I've seen bigger chaps than him knocked out by small men. Here comes the tug to take us down to our anchorage."

Captain Kedge appeared on deck as the tug came alongside and made fast to the schooner's bows.

The small hawsers holding the Polly Ann to the wharf were cast off and she was towed well down the bay, where she dropped anchor on the outside of a small fleet of fishing craft waiting for a favorable wind and the next flood to carry them over the bar.

Soon after coming to anchor the skipper called all hands aft to draw for bunks.

The bunks had numbers chalked on them, and now the Captain held in his hand as many small sticks as there were men in the crew.

Each stick had notches cut in it corresponding to the numbers of the bunks, and one by one the crew stepped up and drew them from Captain Kedge's hand.

In this way the sleeping quarters were distributed with perfect fairness, and there was no chance for grumbling.

Tom was lucky enough to draw one of the wide bunks in the cabin, and at once hastened to stow his possessions in it.

Supper was then announced.

After the skipper was seated the crew made a rush for seats.

Only half of them could be accommodated, owing to the limited size of the forecabin, and those who secured seats were entitled to first table during the trip.

The others had to be contented to eat at second table.

This, however, was a trifling matter, as the food was equally as good and well served as at the first table.

Tom, not being posted, was among those who came in for the second table.

After supper an anchor watch was set, and all hands did pretty much as they pleased until they turned in.

Tom took advantage of this interval to make the acquaintance of his shipmates.

They were a hardy, good-natured lot of chaps, thoroughly experienced in the work the boy had to learn, though as far as seamanship went he felt confident he was their equal.

The tide turned at two in the morning, but as a comparative calm rested on the bay no effort was made on the part of the fishing fleet to get under weigh.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMY.

A breeze sprang up at sunrise, which freshened steadily as the hours went by.

The tide would serve about one o'clock, and as soon as dinner was over all hands got busy, under the skipper's watchful eyes, getting things shipshape for the run out.

"We have a spanking breeze to get under weigh with," said Tom, as he paused a moment or two beside Gid Bates to haul on a rope.

"Breeze!" was the reply. "It'll be half a gale afore you're an hour older."

At last came the order to man the windlass, and half the crew ran to obey the order.

"Haul taut the main throat halliards!" roared Captain Kedge. "Give the peak a good pull, ye lubbers! Here, you, Tom Whitney, are ye goin' to sleep over that jib? Heave away at that windlass there. Hoist away on that fores'l. Lively, now. Are ye goin' to let the Jerusha Peasley get away ahead of us? You, Whitney, get to that jib sheet. Do ye want to have the schooner in irons? That forepeak's saggin'. Give her a good haul, Bates. Lend him a hand there, Hawley. Now she goes."

The anchor left the sandy bottom with a jerk, and the Polly Ann fell off as Tom held the clew of the jib well over to starboard, while the men on the windlass worked away for all they were worth.

The schooner's head swept around, and the foresail filled with a bang as Gid Bates checked with the sheet, while Captain Kedge put the wheel up and yelled:

"Stand by the main sheet, you Bradley. Do you want to spring the main boom before we get under way?"

Tom Whitney had a stirring time of it while the schooner was getting off, as he had never had to hustle quite so much before in his life.

He was equal to the emergency, however, and acquitted himself well.

It was fortunate for him he did so, for the skipper's eagle eye was on almost every move he made, and any miss on his part would have brought down on him a round of stinging sarcasm from the Captain's lips, and probably a blow from Hawley.

All the sails filled together, and the Polly Ann heeled over under the piping wind as she pointed her long, delicate nose seaward and led the fishing fleet across the bar.

Once outside the cape the crew were all kept busy for a couple of hours setting light sails, coiling lines, stowing odds and ends, and making everything snug.

The sea was now short and choppy, the stiff gale blowing the spray in clouds over the vessel as she dashed through it.

"The Polly Ann is a lively boat," remarked Gid Bates to Tom, as the two stood well forward attending to some job assigned to them. "She's given tough races to more

than one fancy yacht, while as a sea-boat in heavy weather she can go where not one yacht in a hundred dare go."

"She's carrying a mighty big spread of canvas," replied the boy. "The skipper has set all the jibs and both gaff tops'ls. One would think we were engaged in a race."

"That's what we are, my lad," nodded Bates. "The skipper is bound to be first on the mackerel ground this trip. Almost any other fishing vessel but a mackereler goin' out at this season would have left both topmasts and her jib-boom home; but every minute gained to the early mackerel-catcher may mean many extra dollars in pocket, so that's why we're sailin' in racin' trim."

Mackerel is a fish that is caught in large numbers off the Atlantic coast of the United States every year, but there are few fish about which so little is known.

Where they come from and where they go are still unsolved mysteries.

Every year about the middle of March they appear in great numbers just north of Cape Hatteras.

"They are very thin at this time, and hardly fit for food; but soon after they strike the feeding grounds of the coast they begin to improve, until early in June, when they have worked their way as far north as New England waters, they are in good condition.

They run as far north as the Gulf of St. Lawrence, from which, in the fall, they suddenly disappear, and are seen no more till the following spring.

All through the summer, but especially at the first of the season, those that are caught near a port are packed in ice and carried into the market fresh.

The greater part of the year's catch, however, is salted in barrels on board the schooners, and afterward repacked on shore in kits and boxes and sent all over the world.

"All hands aft to thumb the hat," roared Captain Kedge at this point.

"Thumbing the hat" is a method of choosing watches by lot, in vogue among the fishing vessels.

Jed Parsons left his dishes and proceeded to the wheel, as a man who was free from watch duty.

The crew of the Polly Ann took hold of an old straw hat, standing in a circle, with their thumbs on the rim.

Captain Kedge turned his back, saying:

"Six is the number, boys. Ready."

Then he reached out his hand backward and placed his forefinger on one of the thumbs at random.

"Whose is it?" he asked.

"Mine, sir," replied Tom Whitney.

The skipper turned around and counted six of the thumbs till he came to Gid Bates.

"My watch," he said.

Then he counted six more, ending at Steve Bradley.

"Port watch," he said.

He continued counting until he had assigned to each his watch, and ended with the words: "Mind, now, and remember who you are to call."

"Tom, much to his disappointment, found himself in

Buck Hawley's watch, and he knew he would have to keep his eyes skinned for trouble.

The cruise thus fairly begun was continued for a couple of days without incident until the Polly Ann reached the fishing grounds.

Then she stood off and on, under easy sail, with a man constantly at the masthead scanning the surface of the water in the hope of seeing mackerel.

The great seine-boat was got overboard, and, with the seine in it, was towed behind the schooner, ready for instant use.

Three other smacks on the same errand as the Polly Ann came upon the ground in turn and held a relative distance one from the other.

Thus three tedious days passed away without results, and then the barometer indicated a change for the worse in the weather.

"We're going to have a dirty night, I guess," remarked Steve Bradley to Tom Whitney, when they came on watch at eight o'clock.

"I'll bet we are," replied the boy, with a glance at the black sky overhead.

"This is where we catch a bit of the rough side of the mackerel business," said the other, looking over the schooner's rail into the black water alongside.

Before long the wind began to rise and sigh ominously through the smack's riggings, while the Polly Ann, under a solitary reefed jib, scudded over the seas.

The lights of the other craft could be seen bobbing in the near distance.

Tom thought that this was an occasion when it was ever so much nicer to be warm and snug ashore.

He wondered what his mother and sister were doing at that moment in far-away Gloucester.

And then he got to thinking about Amy Wilson and asking himself if she thought as much of him as he did of her.

Bradley walked away to the forecastle to light his pipe, leaving the boy alone.

Then it was that a dark figure stole toward him in the gloom.

The man, whoever he was, bent low, and kept well in the shadow of the schooner's bulwark, as though desirous of escaping observation.

He crept nearer and nearer to the preoccupied boy, his horny fingers opening and shutting with convulsive eagerness.

What could be his object?

The closer he drew to Tom the slower and more guarded became his movements.

At last he crouched behind the boy.

Turning his big head from one side to the other, he looked forward, then aft, and then behind.

At the moment there was nobody near.

Then with a cat-like spring he was on the boy.

Throwing one powerful arm around Tom's neck, he bent

his head backward in a vice-like hug that cut the lad's startled cry short.

With the other arm he grasped Tom's legs and lifted them over the rail until they dangled above the foaming water slipping past the vessel's side.

"I've got you where I want you, Tom Whitney," hissed the voice of Buck Hawley in his ear. "You've got less than a minute to live, curse you for a meddlesome young monkey! Only for you my boy would have been aboard this schooner and earnin' a good livin'. You took the bread out of his mouth; now I'll take the breath out of yours. It was a bad day for you when you made an enemy of me. I swore to get square with you, and now I'm keepin' my word. How d'ye like the prospect? You'll soon be food for the fishes."

The scoundrel seemed loath to let go his hold.

It was such satisfaction to play on his victim's nerves.

He wanted to extract every ounce of gratification there was in the tragedy.

Suddenly he heard the sound of the footsteps of one of the watch.

It was Bradley returning.

He could no longer dally, so with a sibilant laugh he released his grip and Tom fell with a splash into the sea.

CHAPTER VII.

CATCHING A LOAD OF MACKEREL.

In the instant that Tom was passing through the air it seemed to him as if all the past events of his young life flashed across his mental vision.

Then he struck the water and went down.

But not far.

Something had gripped him by the arm, and he felt himself dragged along through the waves as he rose to the surface.

Shaking his head and taking a long breath, he saw that he was sailing along close to the schooner's counter, keeping pace with her.

Then he realized that a rope trailing alongside had caught and twisted itself around his left arm, and that he was being dragged at the end of it like a big fish at the end of a fish line.

Instantly he grasped the rope with his free hand and held on with a grip like that of death.

His position was one of great peril in the turbulent water.

He had to throw himself on his back to avoid being suffocated by the rush of the waves.

At length, summoning all of his energies, he shouted, "Help! Help!"

Captain Kedge had just come on deck and was standing beside the helmsman.

His sharp ears distinguished the hail, and he walked quickly to the rail and stood in a listening attitude.

"Help!" cried Tom.

The cry came from only a few feet away, it seemed to

the skipper, and in some astonishment he bent over the rail and stared down into the water.

He could see nothing at first; then a wave broke close to the schooner's side, and for a moment Tom's face and arms were outlined in the froth.

Captain Kedge did not recognize him, but he saw that some poor fellow was overboard and dragging alongside.

With a hoarse command to throw the schooner up in the wind, he ran forward with his rough hand on the bulwark to find where the rope hung over the rail.

By the time he had found it the Polly Ann had lost her way to a great extent and was bobbing up and down to the seas.

"Here, you, Bradley," he roared to the nearest member of the watch, "lend a hand, will ye? There's a man overboard, and he's caught at the end of this line."

The skipper and Bradley exerted themselves to the limit, hauling the line in hand over hand, and they soon landed the dripping and half-unconscious boy on the deck.

"Tom Whitney, by the Lord Harry!" gasped Captain Kedge, as Jan Olsen, a Swede, flashed a lantern in the lad's face.

Tom gasped and kicked out like a dying fish; then he suddenly sat up.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"Where ye ought to be—on board the schooner. How did ye get overboard?"

"Don't ask me," cried the lad, with a shudder.

"Don't ask ye? Ye didn't try to commit suicide, did ye?"

"No, no, no!"

"Then how come ye to get into the water, with this rope wound around your arm?"

"I was thrown over."

"Thrown over? Are you mad?"

"No, I'm not, though it's a wonder I am not, after my terrible experience."

"Ye mean ye fell over, don't ye?" said the skipper.

"No, I didn't fall. A deliberate attempt was made to murder me."

"Murder ye!" exclaimed the startled Captain. "Who would want to do that?"

"Who?" cried the boy. "Your mate—Buck Hawley."

"It's a lie! An infernal lie!" cried Hawley, coming forward, his white, set face showing ghastly in the light of the lantern.

"It isn't a lie," replied Tom. "You came upon me unawares from behind, caught me a strangle hold around the neck with one arm and lifted me over the rail with the other. Then you told me I had only half a minute to live—that you had sworn to get square with me for doing your son out of a job aboard this schooner. After that you let me drop, and if it hadn't been for the rope trailing overboard it would be all over with me by this time."

"I tell you that you lie. You're tryin' to ruin me.

Deny the attempted crime as he might, there was the

brand of guilt in his face and eyes, and Captain Kedge was a quick observer.

"Go into the cabin and change your duds," said the skipper to Tom.

Then he waved the rest of the watch back.

What he said to Hawley when they were by themselves no one ever knew, but his gestures were significant.

When he had finished and walked aft again the mate slunk away like a man who had received a blow.

Tom had received such a shock that he held himself well aloof from the schooner's bulwarks for the remainder of the watch, lest the villain might try to repeat his trick, and with more success.

The night was "dirty," as Bradley had intimated it would be.

It blew heavily, and the gale, shifting from one point to another, kicked up a nasty cross sea, in which the Polly Ann pitched about most unpleasantly.

All the smacks were blown away from the fishing ground, and they did not return till the weather had moderated again.

It was the morning of the ninth day after the departure of the schooner from Gloucester, when the sun was shimmering the surface of the ocean, that the welcome cry of "There they school; half a mile off, weather bow!" came from the lookout man at the masthead.

In less than five minutes after the first cry announcing the appearance of the eagerly expected fish the great thirty-foot, double-ended seine-boat, rowed by eight men, of whom Tom was one, had left the schooner and started in the direction of the fish.

Pulling after them as fast as he could was Buck Hawley, in the single dory that the Polly Ann carried.

"Come, now, boys, get a move on!" cried the seine-master. "Stretch your backs, or you'll all hear from the skipper when you get back, and not in a way you'll like, either. Pull for your lives, all of you! Pull like the old scratch! Don't you see the fellows from the Jerusha Peasley tryin' to beat you?"

It was a tough race to see which boat would reach the school first, and the crews of both seine-boats did their level best to arrive at the scene of action ahead of the other.

The boat from the Polly Ann reached the school of fish first, and the seine-master tossed overboard a small keg, or buoy, to which was attached one end of the upper or cork line of the big net.

Then the boat was pulled in a great circle around the fish that was rippling the water close by, swimming in a dense body close to the surface, and flashing back the sunshine from their steely blue bodies.

While the crew was thus engaged the mate rowed up to the buoy in his dory and came to a stop.

In the shortest time it was possible to accomplish the feat the great net was skilfully drawn around the fish; then Hawley carried the keg-buoy to the seine-boat, in which the other end of the cork line was held and made fast.

The circle was now complete, and the fish were sur-

rounded by a wall of fine but stout twine, the upper edge of which was floated by means of numerous large corks attached to the rope that ran around its entire length, while the lower edge was sunk and held straight down by an equal number of lead rings.

Through the rings ran a second stout line, known as the "purse rope," an end of which remained in the boat.

At a given signal all hands pulled on this, drawing all the leader rings close together, and soon the net was closed together at the bottom, leaving no opening for the fish to escape.

Hauling on this rope and "pursing" the seine was the hardest part of the whole job.

It was also an exciting operation, as there is always an element of uncertainty up to the last moment; for if the fish take alarm, even at the moment the work is almost completed, and dart downward through the still open bottom of the net, all the hard work goes for nothing and must be done over again.

The crew of the Polly Ann, however, were successful in pursing the net without mishap, and a flag was hoisted on an oar as a signal to the skipper to bring the schooner down.

She was soon alongside the closed net with its glistening swarm of fish.

A long-handled scoop-net was rigged with a tackle, and Tom Whitney and his mates were soon dipping out the finny beauties, a half-barrelful at the time, and transferring them to the schooner's deck.

The catch amounted to about one hundred and fifty barrels of mackerel of prime quality as to size, but too thin to spit and salt.

It was nearly dark before they were all on board and the seine properly stowed away in the boat.

Tom had never worked so hard before in his life, and was mighty tired by this time.

He soon found out that there was no rest for him yet awhile.

Sail had to be made on the schooner, and she was headed back for Boston harbor.

Then all hands, except the cook and the man at the wheel, turned to and began "gibbing" and packing the fish.

Mackerel are so delicate that they die almost as soon as they touch the deck, and will quickly spoil if not attended to at once.

Under these circumstances the whole catch had to be cleaned and packed in the ice pens at once.

Tom was astonished at the marvelous celerity with which his mates plucked out the gills and entrails of the fish, and it was at this work he naturally showed up to poor advantage.

He did the best he could to make a showing, and was complimented in the end by Gid Bates, though Captain Kedge, who had watched him off and on, said nothing.

Down in the hold the blocks of ice were removed from a pen and reduced to small bits by heavy, sharp-pointed "slicers."

A layer of this broken ice was shoveled over the bottom of an empty pen and above it was spread a basket of fish.

Then came another layer of ice, and more fish, until the pen was full.

In this way all the pens were filled, and it was long after midnight when the last of the fish were safely packed away.

For the rest of the trip Tom and his mates had little to do but stand watch and clean up the vessel.

Buck Hawley avoided Tom as much as the boy held aloof from him, but the lad more than once caught the mate's vengeful eye upon him in a way that boded him no good.

"I'll have to be on my guard against that scoundrel as long as we both remain together on this boat," thought Tom. "He seems to be one of those chaps that keeps it in for a fellow indefinitely. It's a good thing for him that there was no witness of his attempt on my life that night, or I'd put him through to the extent of the law. As it is, his word is as good as mine in court, and I couldn't do a thing to him."

It took three days for the Polly Ann to make Boston Bay and run into the harbor; but, as the weather held fair, and the crew had nothing to do but calculate their profits and enjoy themselves in any old way, the time passed quickly enough, so Tom thought.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOM FINDS HIMSELF IN A STRANGE SITUATION.

Captain Kedge disposed of the Polly Ann's catch for something like twenty-eight hundred dollars, and, after expenses had been deducted and the net sum divided up, Tom found himself in possession of sixty-one dollars, exactly half of what the regular hands received.

He hastened to mail the greater part of this to his mother in a registered letter which informed her that the schooner would sail direct from Boston on her next trip in a day or two, and consequently he would not be able to get home yet awhile.

That afternoon the smack hauled alongside a wharf to take aboard the necessary ice for her next visit to the mackerel grounds.

The hawsers had hardly been made fast before Tom, much to his surprise, saw Dave Hawley saunter down the dock with a cigarette in his mouth.

He walked aboard and was soon in conversation with his father on the forecastle deck.

Tom caught them looking in his direction once or twice, and he wondered if they were talking about him.

Dave stayed aboard until supper was announced and then walked ashore.

That night Gid Bates, Steve Bradley and Jan Olsen invited Tom to go to the theater with them.

They left the schooner shortly after seven o'clock, passing Buck Hawley, who was lounging near the gangway, smoking.

The mate favored Tom with a half-sarcastic, half-vindictive look, that seemed to mean a whole lot in its way, but the boy pretended not to notice it.

The show was over at eleven and the four started back for the wharf.

They went into two or three saloons on the way, much to Tom's annoyance, for he entertained a strong prejudice against these resorts.

He couldn't very well refuse to accompany his companions in, but of course could not be induced to drink anything stronger than ginger ale.

As they drew near the docks the streets became more lonesome and less brightly illuminated.

As they turned the corner of a big, silent warehouse they were suddenly set upon with a rush by half a dozen men of the roughest class.

Two others—a heavy-set man and a big boy—remained in the background and watched the fight.

The party of four was at once broken up, heavy blows exchanged, and before he hardly realized the situation Tom found himself separated from the others and struggling with three toughs.

Although taken by surprise, the boy put up a good fight until he received a tremendous blow on the back of the head which struck him to the ground unconscious.

His companions were too busy defending themselves to notice what had been done to Tom; besides, the fight was taking place in almost total darkness.

Suddenly the warehouse watchman got on to the racket and blew his whistle for a policeman.

The fight ceased as if by magic, the three ruffians who had been attacking Bates, Bradley and Olsen, and forcing them around the corner of the warehouse, drawing off, slowly at first, but at last taking to their heels.

"Where's Tom Whitney?" asked Gid, when the three men had recovered themselves and looked around for their young companion.

"Search me," replied Bradley. "I thought we were all together."

"No. He must have got separated from us at the beginning of the scrap."

"Supposin' he did, he ought to be near, anyway; but I don't see him."

"Maybe he ran for the schooner at the first onset," suggested Olsen.

"No," replied Bates; "I don't believe he did. He isn't that kind of a chap."

"Then where the deuce is he?" said Bradley.

"Here comes a cop," Bates said.

The policeman, hurrying up, demanded who they were and what was the trouble.

"We belong to the fishing schooner Polly Ann, moored alongside Haley's Wharf," volunteered Gid Bates. "We three and another chap went to a show to-night. As we were returning to our vessel we were attacked at this corner by a gang of toughs and had to defend ourselves. Somebody blew a whistle from a window of that warehouse and then the toughs fled. What bothers us is that our companion, a boy named Tom Whitney, who belongs to the schooner, has disappeared."

After they had looked around the immediate neighborhood without finding any signs of the lad, who the officer at first thought might have been knocked senseless, the conclusion arrived at was that Tom had lit out for the wharf where the Polly Ann lay, so the three men started off for Haley's Dock.

Tom was not on the wharf waiting for them, neither had the watchman seen any one in that vicinity for the last hour, except Buck Hawley, who, he said, had just gone aboard the schooner.

"I don't see how he could have lost his way," said Bates, "for all he had to do was to run straight down the street."

They hung about the head of the dock for a little while talking to the watchman and waiting for Tom to show up.

It was after midnight when they finally turned in, expecting to find Tom in his bunk in the morning.

When Tom Whitney came to his senses he found himself in a small, low-ceiled and not over-clean room.

He was lying fully dressed on the outside of a cot, and the morning sun was shining in on his face.

He was conscious of a racking pain in his head, and could hardly see out of his eyes.

"Where the dickens am I?" he asked himself, in surprise. "This isn't the cabin of the schooner."

It certainly wasn't, and he sat up and looked around the place in stupid astonishment.

Besides the bed there was a rickety table and two chairs standing against the wall, and a washstand, with a bowl and pitcher, near the window.

It was a long time before he could understand how he got there, but at length his previous night's adventure all came back suddenly.

He remembered the attack made upon himself and his companions in the dark by the warehouse; how he had got separated from the others in the melee, and, finally, how he had received a stunning blow on the head that had knocked him silly.

"I must have been picked up by somebody and brought here," he mused. "I wonder where I am, anyway?"

He got up from the bed, feeling dizzy and decidedly weak on his legs.

Looking into the pitcher, he saw it was full of water, so he poured some of it out into the basin and bathed his face and head.

"That feels good, at any rate," he murmured, as he splashed the water on his feverish forehead.

Seizing a ragged towel, he dried his face and found that his eyesight was now much clearer.

Then he looked out of the window.

Apparently he was in the third story of an old wooden tenement in a poor locality, judging from the rear views he caught of several adjacent buildings.

He could hear the noise of traffic from the street in front, and the tooting of tugs and other steam craft in the bay.

"This house can't be very far from the water-front, that seems certain," he said to himself. "I guess I'll go down-

stairs, thank the people, whoever they are, for bringing me here, and then make tracks for the schooner."

He walked to the door, turned the knob, and was surprised to find it locked.

Looking through the keyhole, he saw the key was in it.

"Evidently I'm locked in, and must stay here till some one comes to let me out. I can't see why they locked the door. Maybe it was an accident."

So Tom lay down again on the bed to ease his head and to await developments.

Whether it was the pain that dulled his senses, or sheer weariness, certain it is he presently fell asleep, and did not hear the key turn and the door open, cautiously at first, and afterward to its full extent.

A thickset, bearded man entered the room, looked at the boy, and then motioned to some one on the outside to enter.

The second visitor was Dave Hawley.

He, too, looked down at Tom Whitney, and grinned maliciously.

"He's been up," said the man.

"How do you know?" asked Dave.

His companion pointed at the water in the bowl.

"Then he's only asleep now, and may wake up at any moment. I don't want him to see me," said Dave, retreating to the doorway.

The man looked keenly around the room and then followed young Hawley.

"We'll go into the next room and talk," he said, closing the door and locking it.

The snap of the lock awoke Tom and he sat up suddenly.

"What was that?"

Everything was as before he fell asleep.

"I've been asleep," he said. "I wonder how long? I can't have been a great while, for the sun is shining in the same place I noticed it when washing my face. I'll take another face bath and see if I can't remain awake. Somebody is liable to come any moment, and if they found me asleep they'd go away, no doubt, without awaking me."

He soused his face once more, feeling greatly refreshed, and sat down again to wait.

Then it was he heard the sound of conversation in the neighboring room, and one of the voices seemed quite familiar to him.

CHAPTER IX.

TOM MAKES A BREAK FOR LIBERTY.

"So the boy is to be shipped aboard some craft bound for a foreign port, is that the idea?" asked a foghorn voice.

"That's it," replied the person whose tones seemed familiar to Tom, though he couldn't place the individual at the moment.

"What did you say his name was?" inquired the foghorn.

"Tom Whitney."

Tom started as though a wasp had stung him, and at the same moment the identity of the speaker occurred to him.

"Why, that's Dave Hawley," he breathed. "What does all this mean?"

He was not kept long in the dark, for the partition was thin, and the talkers made no effort to lower their voices.

"And where does he hail from?" asked the man with the hoarse intonation.

"Glo'ster."

"You say he belongs to the schooner Polly Ann, now lying at Haley's Dock?"

"That's right."

"Then he understands the ropes, I reckon. It will be safe for me to ship him as an A. B. At any rate, that's what I'll do. Now what do I get for taking all the risk and trouble of this here job? You've only squared up for the heelers I sent out last night."

"Twenty-five dollars," replied Dave.

"Twenty-five marlingspikes!" roared the foghorn voice. "I must have at least twice that."

"But you'll get a wad for shippin' him, won't you?" protested young Hawley.

"Sure, I'll get somethin', but nothin' as big as you think," replied the man, cautiously. "Rec'lect, I've got to have help, and must hire a boat to take him to a vessel in the stream; and there's the risk of it all, which is considerable. You can't shanghai a man these days with the same ease that we used to in days gone by. There's the cop on this beat to be watched. Then we've got to steer clear of the harbor police, for they might ask awkward questions. I ought to have a hundred bones for this job, but I'm willin' to shave the price some, as things is quiet and I need the money."

"Well, let it go at fifty," said Dave; "but there must be no mistake about it. He must be sent where he won't get back in a hurry."

"I'll see to that, don't you worry, young man. I know a bark that's bound for Leghorn. She might do, though the crew are mostly Lascars."

"I don't care what they are," retorted Hawley. "In fact, the worse they are the better dad and I'll like it."

"You must have it in for the young chap mighty strong," said the foghorn voice, with a note of curiosity in it.

"We have, bet your life. He done me out of a good job this summer, and dad and me are both sore over that. Besides, I hate him, anyway. He cut me out of my girl down at Glo'ster. There are other reasons, too."

"Well, that ain't none of my business. I'm out for the dough, and I don't care how I make, so long as I keep clear of the p'lice. Have you got the fifty with you? I don't make no move till I have it in my clothes. I don't b'lieve in tryin' to collect the price after the job is done. Most people have short memories when they owe money. Besides, I don't know nothin' about you, anyway. So stump up if you want me to go ahead in this matter."

"I'm ready to pay up, but I want a receipt," said Dave.

"What for?" asked his companion, suspiciously. "Receipts is dangerous. I don't usually give no such things."

"Dad'll want to see what I've done with his money," replied Dave.

"If he can't trust your word he ought to have fetched it himself."

"Well, here's your money. Count it and see that it's all right," said Dave.

Tom presumed that the gentleman with the foghorn voice was counting the cash, for a short pause in the conversation ensued.

"Right as a trivet," said the man at length. "You can depend on me providing for the young man in a way that will prevent him from bothering you for some time to come."

These remarks being followed by a shuffling of feet, Tom concluded that the interview was breaking up.

He heard the pair of plotters walk out into the corridor, close the door of the room and go downstairs.

Finally a door slammed somewhere below and silence followed.

"So it seems I was knocked out last night as the result of a put-up job. Buck Hawley and his rascally son are at the bottom of it all. Their object seems to be to get me out of the country for an indefinite time. Well, forewarned is forearmed, they say. Now that I am wise to their purpose, I ought to be able to think up some way to fool them. The first thing is to get out of this room. How can I accomplish that?"

Tom went to the window, raised the sash gently and looked out.

As he had supposed, there was a clear fall of three stories to an alley below.

The adjoining house, however, was only three feet away—that is, the width of the alley.

There was a closed window opposite to him across this space.

The panes were opaque with the grime of months or years.

"If I could reach that window, and it isn't fastened, I'd have a chance to escape to the street through that building," Tom thought.

The idea was good, but the question was to reach the window.

While he was considering the matter he heard steps coming up the stairs.

Thinking possibly this was somebody coming to visit him, Tom concluded to play possum.

He threw himself on the bed, closed his eyes and simulated sleep.

He had not made a mistake, for the key rattled in the lock, the door was cautiously opened, and the thickset man with the beard entered with a battered tray containing some food for his prisoner.

He placed it upon the table and withdrew as softly as he had entered.

As soon as Tom heard his retreating steps on the stairs he sprang up and looked at the provender.

It was not as good as he had been getting on board the schooner, for the mackerel fishermen lived uncommonly

well for sailors, but it was good enough to tempt an empty and healthy stomach like Tom's.

"I might as well make away with that stuff, since it's intended for me, and I'm as hungry as a hunter. It will give me strength to go ahead with some plan for escape."

So the boy seated himself in one of the chairs and polished off the piece of tough steak, the bread and cheap butter, the small boiled potato, and, lastly, the cup of muddy-looking and decidedly inferior coffee.

"I feel better now," he breathed. "It's wonderful what an improvement a full stomach makes over an empty one. My head feels better, too. I'd give something to know what time it is."

He looked up at the sun and judged it to be around eleven o'clock.

Then he glanced across at the window in the opposite building and began to figure on how he could reach it, and whether or not it was secured on the inside.

The alley was deserted and, so far as he could see, there was not a soul in sight, although hundreds of people were passing and repassing along the street not over sixty feet away.

Suddenly an idea struck him.

He went to the cot, raised the straw mattress, and saw that the bottom consisted of three slats.

They were six feet in length, and therefore would easily span the alley.

He pulled them out from under the mattress and, opening the window to its widest extent, laid them from sill to sill.

Then with beating heart he crawled out on the frail bridge, uncertain whether the slats would bear his weight.

If they gave way he would be precipitated into the alley, with every chance of breaking his neck.

The result to be achieved, however, he considered worth the risk.

He made his way across the chasm, tried the sash of the window, and was overjoyed to find that it readily yielded to his touch.

Looking into the room, he saw that it was filled with various kinds of rubbish.

He stepped in, hauled in the three slats, and shut down the window.

"There'll be something doing," he grinned, "when the chap in the other house discovers I've flown the coop. I hope to be away from the neighborhood before that time."

He tiptoed his way across the dirty floor, pulled open a door and walked out into a bare-looking landing.

"This building doesn't look as if it was tenanted," he said, glancing down the stairway.

Still, he proceeded downward with due caution and reached the second-floor landing.

Three doors opened on this.

One was ajar, and Tom peered into the room beyond.

There wasn't a thing in it but a pile of dirt swept into one corner.

"The house is an empty one, for a fact," he said, with a feeling of relief.

Then he continued on down to the first floor, his footsteps raising echoes in the silent building.

Striking the main entry, he walked forward till he reached a door.

It was not locked, and Tom opened it a little way and looked out.

He found the empty building was a rear tenement, and that to reach the street he would have to cross a narrow yard and then pass through the front house, which showed abundant evidences of life.

Half a dozen empty beer kegs rolled into a confused heap near the rear door of the front building indicated that the ground floor was used as a saloon.

"I ought to have no trouble reaching the street through that place," thought Tom, after a survey of the premises.

Thus encouraged, he opened the door and passed out into the yard.

A few steps took him to the back door of the saloon, which he opened and entered.

He found himself in a gloomy passage, with a door to his right and another directly ahead.

He walked to the latter, which admitted him to the bar-room itself.

Only about twenty-five feet now intervened between the boy and the street door, where the morning sunshine was playing on the three wooden steps which led down from the sidewalk, where all was life and motion.

Assuming a careless demeanor, Tom started for the door.

There was only one customer in the place, a thickset, bearded man, who had just finished a whisky and was talking to the barkeeper, a villainous-looking fellow, whose face would have been an ornament to any rogues' gallery.

He stood half facing the back of the saloon, and his eyes mechanically fell upon Tom Whitney as he crossed the floor.

As the boy came well into the light, the bearded man regarded him with a sharp look, which gradually assumed one of surprise.

With a smothered oath he suddenly left the bar and planted himself squarely in front of the lad.

"Your name is Tom Whitney, isn't it?" he ejaculated, in a hoarse voice.

Tom started back with an air of astonishment and uneasiness.

"How did you get out of that room in my house?" demanded the bearded man.

Instantly Tom realized that he was face to face with the man of the foghorn voice.

CHAPTER X.

OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

Taking immediate advantage of the boy's confusion, the bearded man seized Tom by the arms and began to drag him back to the rear of the saloon, at the same time calling on the barkeeper to help him.

That worthy was not slow in coming to his aid, and Tom found his escape cut off.

The boy, however, was not going to give up without a struggle, and, being strong and wiry, he was not an easy mark to overcome.

Had he been able to use his fists, he undoubtedly would have given the men an interesting fistic argument, but, as the thickset man held his arms pinned to his sides, he was placed at such a disadvantage that the barkeeper easily got a strangle hold on him, and it was then all up with Tom.

He was carried into one of the private rooms at the back, gagged and bound, as many other unfortunates had been served before.

The man with the foghorn voice then held a consultation with the barkeeper.

The result of it was that Tom was carried down into the foul-smelling cellar, the repository for full whiskey, beer and ale barrels, and dumped into a dark corner.

"He'll be safe enough here," said the barkeeper, holding a bit of candle for the bearded man to make sure that Tom's bonds were not likely to give way. "How did he get away from your place?"

"That's what puzzles me," replied the other. "I had him locked in a third-story room overlooking the alley. Besides, I did not think he had any suspicions that he was being detained against his will, other than the fact that the door was locked. He must have crossed over into that empty house behind here in some way. I'm going up to see how he managed to do it."

"He can stay here all day, and after dark I'll help you get him back to your premises," said the barkeeper, as they walked away, ascended the stairs and replaced the trap-door.

"I'm afraid my name is mud now," thought Tom, dismally, in the solitude and darkness of the cellar. "They've got me dead to——"

"Hello!"

A cheery voice came out of the gloom close by, to Tom's amazement.

The boy would have answered the hail if it had been in his power to do so, but the wad of cloth which served as a gag prevented him.

He did the next best thing to show that he was alive—he squirmed around on the floor and beat his bound feet against the wall.

"What's the matter, matey?" said the voice. "Can't you use your mouth?"

Tom thumped the wall again.

"If I warn't triced up myself, like a fowl sent to market, I'd come over and pull that gag out of your mouth," said the voice. "However, if you'll have patience, maybe I'll be able to free myself after a while, and then I'll set you loose, too."

Then followed sounds that indicated a struggle on the part of the other prisoner with his fetters.

Tom's momentary discouragement had now given place to a thrill of hope.

He wondered who this other unfortunate was, and why he was in the cellar.

"I've got one hand free," spoke up the voice again. "I'll be rid of the rope in a jiffy now."

Five minutes elapsed before the man spoke again, and then there was a ring of satisfaction in his tones.

"I've got the dern things off at last," he said.

Then he got up and walked over to where Tom lay.

He put his hand in his pocket, drew out a match and struck it.

Tom looked up and saw a well-built, good-natured-looking young fellow of perhaps twenty-one bending over him.

"Well," laughed the other, "they have got you tied up to the queen's taste. They meant to make sure that you wouldn't give 'em the slip. Now what's your name, and who are you?" he added, after taking the cloth from Tom's mouth.

"I'm much obliged to you," replied our hero, gratefully. "My name is Tom Whitney, and I live at Glo'ster. What's your name?"

"George Field. I hail from Nantucket. I was discharged from the bark Saranac yesterday afternoon, and was bound home, when I ran into a smooth-spoken chap named Chudley, who steered me into the saloon above for a drink, and the next thing I remember I found myself tied up down in this hole. I was drugged, and it isn't hard for me to see through the game that was played upon me. They mean to ship me aboard some outward-bound craft and collect the blood-money. I suppose you're in the same boat, matey?"

"Yes," replied Tom.

"Then you're a sailor, too?"

"I belong to the Glo'ster fishing smack Polly Ann, which is taking ice aboard at Haley's Wharf to-day. The mate of the schooner is dead sore on me because I got the berth he wanted for his son. So he put up a job on me, and this is the result."

"So that's it, eh?" said Field, who all this time was loosening the rope that bound Tom's arms and legs. "Well, I guess you and I ought to be able to put up a stiffish fight against these shanghaiers. There, now, get up and shake yourself."

Tom did so; then the two companions in misfortune sat down, each on a beer keg, to consider the situation and plan their escape from the cellar.

"I don't believe that trap is secured," said Field. "We might get out that way and then make a sudden rush for the street door through the barroom. We'd be on the sidewalk before any one thought to stop us, and then we'd be safe enough for these rascals, I guess."

"I'm with you," replied Tom. "If it comes to a fist fight I can hold my own."

"All right. We might as well make a break at once. We can't get out of this place any too soon to suit me."

At that moment the trap was raised and fell back with a bang, and a pair of legs was seen descending the steps.

Field grabbed Tom by the arm and drew him back into the corner behind a whiskey barrel.

As his hand slipped over the edge of the upright barrel his fingers came in contact with a bung-starter.

He seized it and held it in his hand, ready for instant action.

The intruder was the barkeeper's assistant, who had just come on duty and knew nothing about the prisoners in the cellar.

He had a candle in one hand and a copper two-gallon measure in the other.

He made his way to a barrel that had a spigot in it and proceeded to fill the measure with gin.

Tom and his companion watched him from their place of concealment.

As soon as the man had filled his can he blew out the light and left the cellar.

"Now," said Field, after they had waited about five minutes, "let's make a start."

The speaker led the way, with Tom close at his heels, up the steps to the trap.

Field cautiously raised the trap and looked around the little back room, that was furnished with a plain round table encircled with four chairs.

There was no one in it, so he pushed the trap up and stepped out into the room.

Then he held it for Tom to make his exit from the cellar, after which he let it fall back into its place without a sound.

"So far so good," he said in a whisper. "Wait till I take a peep into the barroom."

There were half a dozen longshoremen lined up at the bar, who were being waited on by the barkeeper and his assistant.

Several other customers sat around a couple of the tables drinking lager.

"Take a look yourself," said Field, making way for Tom.

While they were thus engaged a face appeared at the window behind them, which overlooked the little yard.

It was the countenance of the bearded man.

What he saw evidently surprised him, but he was a quick thinker and accustomed to facing emergencies.

He ran around to the door of the passage communicating with the barroom.

At that moment Field said:

"Are you ready for a dash, Tom? We've got a clear path to the door and the barkeepers are both engaged."

"I'm ready," replied the boy.

"Then follow close behind me, and we'll be outside in a jiffy."

They emerged from the little room, and Field made a run for the door, gaining it easily and springing upon the sidewalk.

As Tom started to follow him the bearded man flung open the passage door and intercepted him.

The shock was felt by both and they rolled together on the floor.

The bearded man had the advantage of the situation,

as he knew just what he was doing, while Tom thought the collision was purely accidental.

It only took a moment or two for the boy to realize that he was being held down by a pair of powerful arms, and he struggled to get away.

By this time the racket had attracted general notice in the barroom, and the barkeeper came around to see what the scrap was about.

"Here, Brannigan," said the bearded man, "give me a hand. This is the chap we put in the cellar. He managed to get free somehow or another and was just on the point of getting clean off, when I luckily got on to him and put a spoke in his wheel."

"Well, may I be jiggered!" exclaimed the barkeeper. "I don't see how he ever managed to get loose."

"There was another chap with him in that room, and probably he got into the cellar and did the trick. Get another rope, quick!"

Brannigan got the rope, and in two minutes Tom knew that the game was all up.

CHAPTER XI.

SHANGHAIED.

"We can't put this lad back in the cellar again," said the bearded man, after Tom had been securely bound once more.

"Then we'll carry him into the cellar of the vacant house," said Brannigan.

"No," replied the other. "I'll take him into my place. That other fellow who got away will bring the cops down here, and they'll search both buildings. Now, I've got a place in my house where he'll be as snug as a bug, and not even the police can find him if they go through my lodgings. I ought to have taken him there in the first place. But better late than never. Help me carry him into the yard."

Between them they bore Tom into the small yard.

"Wait till I get on the fence, then boost him up and get back to your work."

In two minutes the thickset man was dragging the boy into the rear of his house.

He yanked his victim down into the cellar with as little ceremony as if he was handling a sack of potatoes.

Striking a match, he lighted a lantern that hung from a nail in a cross-beam.

"Now, my slippery friend, I think you'll find it mighty difficult to make a third attempt to escape. I had no idea you were quite so lively, but I have your wings clipped this time."

He opened the door of a good-sized closet, bent down and lifted up the entire floor, which worked on hinges, revealing in the lantern light a kind of ship's ladder.

Down this he carried Tom in his arms and laid him on an old mattress, which nearly filled the narrow, cell-like enclosure.

"There, my cock-sparrow, if you can get out of this place you'll do better than any one ever did before. You're

right on the level with the river, and one of the city's sewers runs alongside your head. You can amuse yourself listenin' to the rush of the water. I'll fetch you somethin' to eat about dark or later. Whether you stay here a day or a week will depend on circumstances."

The bearded man took up the lantern, ascended the ladder, closed the trap and was gone, leaving Tom in the dark and a prey to very discouraging thoughts.

The only sound that broke the silence of the cell was the flow of water in the sewer close by his head.

"This is the toughest deal I've ever been up against," thought the boy. "Just as I thought I was going to get clear off that rascal turns up and queers me. Talk about hard luck! The only chance I see is that Field will bring the police down on the barroom next door, and that, not finding me there, they may search the neighborhood and discover this vault, for that's what it looks like."

Hours passed and nothing happened to break in on the monotony of his imprisonment.

Tom finally gave up all hope of a rescue and resigned himself to whatever fate had in store for him.

At last the stuffy atmosphere of the cell overcame him and he fell asleep.

He awoke at last to a stupid realization that a light was flashing in his face.

The bearded man was standing beside him, with a lantern in one hand and a cup of coffee and two sandwiches perched upon it in the other.

He placed the articles on the floor and then proceeded to loosen one of Tom's hands.

"Now, then, be lively," said the man. "Eat those sandwiches and pour down that coffee, for I can't stay here all night."

Tom had a notion to refuse, but thought better of it as he realized he had an appetite sharpened by a whole day's fasting.

So he ate the sandwiches, which tasted good, and swallowed the coffee.

The man watched him with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

He picked up the dishes and the lantern and remounted the ladder, without taking the trouble to tie the boy's arm again.

Tom watched his exit in a dreamy kind of way.

There seemed to be a buzzing sound in his head, and a queer feeling benumbed his faculties.

He made one effort to rise on his elbow, but something pulled him back on the mattress.

Then his senses fled, and he lay after that like a log, breathing thickly.

It was hours after that when he opened his eyes, not in the darkness of the cell, but in the dingy gloom of a vessel's forecabin.

He lay upon one of the eight bunks that lined the two sides of the place.

The dull light of early morning was sifting through the scuttle opening.

The watch below, three hardy-looking, more or less bearded men, were snoring away in their bunks.

The vessel itself was rising and falling in a sweeping roll to the surges of the broad Atlantic.

Tom lay looking at the ceiling of the smoke and dirt begrimed forecastle for some little time before he came to understand the situation he was in.

Then he realized the truth.

He had been shanghaied, and was aboard some outward-bound craft.

Well, he would have to make the best of a bad job.

There was lots for him to learn, for he had no experience on board a square-rigged vessel, and he guessed he would have a rough time learning it, especially if the man with the foghorn voice had shipped him as an A. B.

At this moment there was a thumping sound on the deck above and a hoarse voice roared down the scuttle opening:

"All hands on deck! Look alive, my hearties! Tumble up! Tumble up!"

This hail aroused the slumbering sailors and they tumbled up in a hurry.

Tom, feeling that he might as well face the music now as later on, followed them up the short ladder.

The second mate, after giving the boy a sharp look, set him to washing down the deck with the others.

Tom soon found out that he was one of the crew of the British bark *Wanderer*, of Cardiff, Wales, which had sailed from Boston harbor early that morning.

The vessel was now off Boston Light, heading E.N.E.

We will not dwell on our hero's first experiences on the vessel, but simply say that he found he was not by any means in a bed of roses.

At six bells (three o'clock) in the afternoon watch an incident happened which unexpectedly terminated Tom's connection with the bark.

The sky was overcast, and the wind was coming out of the east, when the lookout announced a sail in sight.

"Aye, aye! Where away?" asked the skipper, who was on deck at the time.

"Two points off the weather bow, sir," was the reply.

"Run up and see what you make of her, Mr. Bruce," cried the captain, hailing the second mate, who was forward. "Well, what is she, Mr. Bruce?" he asked impatiently.

"I make her out to be a dismasted schooner, with a flag of distress flying from a jury foremast," replied the mate, from his perch half-way up the lower ratlines.

"Aye, aye, I have her now," said the skipper, bringing his glass to bear on the derelict.

He ordered the bark's course changed a point to the eastward, and with every sail drawing the *Wanderer* bore down on the disabled craft.

Fifteen minutes later the skipper ordered the lashings thrown off one of the quarter boats.

"Take two men with you, Mr. Bruce, and keep your eye on the weather. I don't much like the looks of the sky. I believe there's a fog coming up."

The mate stowed a small keg of water and a case of biscuits in the boat, which was already swinging at her davits.

He called on Tom and another member of the crew to man the davits, for the schooner, which, on closer inspection, seemed to be waterlogged, was now close aboard.

"There doesn't seem to be a soul aboard of her," said the captain to his first mate.

They may be below, sir. She's got a jib and fores'l to keep her head before the wind," observed the mate. "The helm's lashed to the weather bulwarks. Not a stick left but the stump of the mainmast, and the spar for'ard rigged as a jury foremast."

"Lower away, Mr. Bruce," said the skipper.

The bark had been thrown up in the wind, and down went the quarter boat to the water, with Tom and the other man at the falls and the mate standing up.

The boat was cast loose, and Tom and his companion got out their oars and pulled for the schooner.

When close under her quarter the mate hailed, but received no reply.

The boat was pulled around on the other side and he hailed again several times.

No answer being received, he ordered the rowers to pull close in, and he seized a line hanging over the wreck's side.

"Here, you, Whitney," he cried to Tom. "Shin up, take a look around, and don't lose any time over it. If there's no one aboard we'll haul off and let her drift."

Tom pulled himself aboard the schooner and made a break for the cabin first of all.

Running down the steps, he found the place entirely deserted, with articles thrown about pell mell, and other evidences of a hasty departure on the part of skipper and crew.

"I guess there isn't any use looking in the fok's'l," he said to himself. "The whole crowd seems to have dusted out."

At that moment he thought he heard a shout from the mate in the boat.

He started to return to the deck, when suddenly a heavy squall struck the wreck and forced her over on her beam ends.

Tom was pitched to the floor of the cabin, and, his head striking against the leg of the stationary table, he rolled over unconscious.

CHAPTER XII.

IN FOG AND DARKNESS.

The squall was of short duration, and the schooner soon righted, after taking a few barrels of water into the cabin, which swirled around Tom's head and brought him back to consciousness.

A dense fog came up in the wake of the blow, and when the boy reached the deck the air was so thick all around it was impossible for him to see a dozen yards in any direction.

He looked over the side to see if the boat was still there, though he did not expect to find it; but it wasn't.

The truth forced itself on his mind that he was alone

on the abandoned schooner, many miles from the nearest land, and in the grasp of a heavy fog.

The chances of an early rescue seemed to be very slight.

If he could find nothing to eat on board he might float around on the surface of the ocean until he perished of starvation.

The prospect was certainly not a cheerful one.

Tom sat down on the top of the short companion ladder leading to the cabin and moped for an hour or two.

It would have been bad enough if he could have looked out on the four quarters of a sailless waterscape, but to be hedged in by a mist as thick as pea soup was dismal and discouraging beyond description.

Then on top of all came the cravings of a healthy stomach.

At last in utter desperation Tom started on a tour of investigation.

His most pressing object was to try and find something that he could eat.

He found the pantry of this vessel was in the cabin—a small end room.

It showed evidences of having been pretty well cleaned out by the crew when they took to the boats.

Boxes of preserved meats and vegetables had been pried open and their contents gone.

Cases of crackers had been similarly treated.

Tom found nothing but fragments of stuff which had been opened previously for general consumption, or had been dropped in the rush to get away from the vessel.

There was enough to satisfy his hunger for the present, and, as there was a breaker three-quarters full of good water, his hopes rose a bit, and he returned to his lonesome seat feeling somewhat better.

As the hours went by the fog showed no disposition to lift.

Tom got tired of doing nothing, so he lighted a lantern he found in the pantry and started in to look about the cabin.

In a locker under one of the bunks he discovered a sextant, several charts, an old-fashioned, loaded Colt's revolver, five or six boxes of fancy crackers, that were particularly welcome to him; a jar almost full of preserved ginger, a lot of shirts, underclothes, socks and various other articles.

In another locker he found, in addition to an assortment of underwear, several books, a watch and a leather pouch containing a handful of gold and silver coins, amounting to eighty dollars.

Tom then went forward and looked into the fore-castle.

It was a dingy, gloomy place, fitted with rough bunks, filled with the crew's bedding and some of their personal belongings.

By the time he had finished his tour of inspection night had closed in, and the fog had grown thicker, if anything.

Whether the derelict was drifting in toward the coast, or further out to sea, Tom, of course, could form no idea.

As a matter of fact, however, both the fog and the vessel

were approaching the iron-bound coast of Maine—the former very much faster than the latter.

Tom's one great fear was that some steamer or other vessel might run the waterlogged schooner down in the darkness and the fog, in which event his own situation would be most perilous, with the chances in favor of him losing his life.

For that reason he did not care to risk going to sleep in the cabin, but got a mattress from one of the bunks on deck, with a couple of blankets to roll himself up in, and then lay down.

The slight rise and fall of the schooner, together with the wash of the water against her sides, lulled the boy to sleep, and for several hours he lay in sweet forgetfulness of his unpleasant situation.

The wind rose a bit after midnight, and, acting on the jib and reefed foresail, propelled the derelict at about four knots an hour toward the coast.

As morning approached the wind grew stronger, causing the schooner to roll sluggishly from side to side.

On one of these occasions the vessel dipped more than usual, and Tom was sent sliding and floundering into the scupper.

Naturally he woke up, and for a moment didn't understand just where he was.

The schooner then heeled over in the other direction, and the boy grabbed a rope that his hand came in contact with to save himself from slipping down into the opposite scupper.

By the time the derelict righted once more he got on his feet.

It was as dark as the ace of spades and the fog was just as thick as ever.

"There seems to be quite a stiff breeze blowing, he said, as he made his way back to the stump of the mainmast, against which he had been sleeping. "It's a wonder it wouldn't break up this fog. Hello! What's that?"

It was a new and most peculiar sound, seemingly right ahead.

A weird bellowing noise, that rose and fell, and rose again, each time a little louder than before.

It was not like that of any living creature he had ever heard or dreamed of, but rather the menace of some horrible monster unknown to earth or air.

"What can that be?" he breathed, in some little alarm, for to his frightened fancy the palpitating atmosphere around him suddenly seemed to be alive with ghostly shapes, that formed and dissolved and re-formed again.

If the rattled boy saw anything at all, it was the curling masses of fog disturbed by the puffs of wind.

All the stories of hideous shapes that dwelt beneath the ocean waves, and all the old legends of the sea his father had related to him, while they both used to stand together at the tiller of the sloop Martha Perkins, came to him now and sent the chills crawling up and down his back.

Solitude and night and a thick fog, far removed from

human kind, inevitably produces in the mind strange effects.

All ordinary reasoning and common sense go astray.

Tom clung to a fractured piece of the broken mast and gazed with bulging eyes out into the thick air, every nerve on the tingle as his ears listened to that strange, indescribable bellowing sound that was evidently approaching the vessel.

As it grew louder and more distinct another sound, which his practiced ears recognized as the surf beating upon a stretch of rocks, mingled with it.

"The schooner is drifting ashore," he muttered. "We shall be on the rocks before long, and then I'll have to swim out for myself. Oh, that it was daylight!"

As if in answer to his appeal, he soon began to notice a lighting up of the air behind him.

As the moments slipped by the pall of darkness took on a grayish tinge that heralded the coming of another day.

The fog, however, showed no signs of dissipating.

Nor did that disquieting bellowing sound cease, but rather increased in intensity, just as the hollow roar of the surf augmented in volume.

Tom was now satisfied the terrifying noise came from the shore that the derelict was approaching.

Then all at once he reasoned out the cause of it.

The schooner was drifting in upon the Maine coast, which is one of the most inhospitable in the world.

At the base of many of the high cliffs, where the ocean surges beat continually, are deep fissures and sea caverns, into which the green water, changes to yeasty foam, ever churns and rushes night and day, causing strange bellowing sounds to arise from the expulsion of the partially imprisoned air.

The moment Tom thought of that his fears dropped away from him and he was himself once more.

Then, too, morning was coming on fast, and the boy felt that there was nothing in all the world quite so blessed as daylight.

To make the outlook still more encouraging, the fog seemed to be thinning out.

"I wonder what part of the coast we're going ashore on?" he asked himself. "I hope there's a bit of beach that I can reach. If it's nothing but headlands I will stand a mighty poor show for my life."

The bellowing sound was now dying away, as if the tide had either risen or fallen to a point that did away with the action of the air in the cavern.

The sun now rose above the water horizon, and as if the fog took this as a signal to disperse it rose and melted away westward.

Right ahead, within perhaps a quarter of a mile, lay a small green island, almost surrounded with ugly looking reefs.

The schooner was headed as straight as a die for a narrow opening between two low cliffs.

This channel led right into a kind of almost land-locked basin.

It was a silent and picturesque spot, and from this basin Tom caught the low moaning bellow which, when at its height, had so alarmed him in the dark.

Six or eight miles away, with other islands between, lay the coast of Maine.

From the trend of the current Tom saw that the derelict would either pass between the cliffs into the basin or strike the rocks close by.

In any case he felt sure of reaching the island without hazarding his life.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GHASTLY DISCOVERY.

Tom did not know the name of this little island the schooner was closing in on, nor, for that matter, did his ignorance on the subject worry him.

"Any port in a storm," as the saying is, was what he was looking for, and good dry land, even an island several miles off shore, was preferable to the deck of a disabled vessel which a sudden change in the wind was likely to drive off to sea again.

This island, however, was called "The Horseshoe," or Horseshoe Island, because it resembled a horseshoe, with the points drawn close—that is, it seemed like an attempt on the part of nature to inclose a small portion of the sea within high, fir-covered walls.

At the points of the horseshoe was a narrow channel connecting the enclosed water and the outside ocean, and through this the tides flowed fiercely; but so protected was the inner basin that scarcely a ripple disturbed its surface.

The influence of this narrow channel evidently extended out some distance, to account for the fact that the schooner seemed to be drawn right for the entrance to the horseshoe.

Tom was soon satisfied that the derelict would pass through the entrance, and consequently he had no further anxiety for his own safety.

He descended the companionway to the cabin, and, grabbing a box of the fancy biscuits, as well as the jar of preserved ginger, with a spoon to dip the sweet stuff out, he returned to the deck to eat his breakfast and watch the progress of the schooner.

The derelict glided right on toward the mouth of the horseshoe, just as if some unseen power was drawing her into the little landlocked haven.

Ten minutes more and she shot between the twin projections, so close to both as almost to scrape her sides upon the rocks.

The impetus carried her over to the further side of the basin, where her broken bowsprit bumped gently against the irregular wall of rock which formed a sort of amphitheater all around her.

Then she floated off to one side of this placid retreat and gradually came to a complete rest under a rocky shelf, upon which Tom at once sprang with a feeling of great satisfaction.

There he finished his breakfast, while gazing down into

the basin and around upon the green shrubbery, that looked resplendant in the morning sunshine.

He made one discovery from this point that made his heart beat with joy.

Floating close to a narrow patch of beach on the opposite arm of the horseshoe was a staunch-looking rowboat.

That seemed to solve the problem right away of how he was to reach the main shore.

"Luck is beginning to turn my way at last," he said, with a feeling of relief. "I won't have to remain on this island a moment longer than I care to. Thank goodness for that, for a few boxes of crackers and a jar of preserved ginger is not exactly what I should care to adopt for a regular diet, even while they held out. There ought to be some clams around here. When the tide goes down I'll hunt for them and have a decent meal."

Tom lost no time in walking around the top of the rocky wall and then descending to the bit of white beach in order to secure the boat.

He was delighted to find a pair of oars in her, and he rowed her to the schooner and secured her.

He went into the cabin, where he took possession of the revolver, the pouch of money, the sextant, which he knew he could dispose of for several dollars, and sundry other articles of value, including a watch.

He made a package of everything but the watch and money, and deposited it in the boat.

Then he walked to a high rock on the island, mounted it, and viewed the distant shore as well as he could to determine what point he should make for when he pulled out of the basin in the rowboat.

He could see no houses or other evidences of civilization at that distance—nothing but a long line of cliffs, with apparent indentations; but he had great hopes of finding his way up some bay or small river to a town or village, whence he would be able to make his way to the railroad.

He made out one sail in the far distance, but whether the craft was heading that way or not he couldn't tell.

By the time he had taken all the observations he wished the tide was well on the ebb, and once more he heard the bellowing noise rising out of the basin.

He thought he would go and see just what made this sound.

So he returned to the derelict, and, boarding the small boat, rowed in the direction of the sound.

It came from a point near the patch of beach, which was now much wider, owing to the receding of the water.

He grounded the boat and looked around among the weed-covered rocks that a little while before had been covered with water.

Suddenly he found himself staring at a dark opening beneath an overhanging shelf of rock not two rods away.

Getting down on his hands and knees, he looked in.

It seemed to be the opening to a marine cavern.

He crawled in a short distance and came to a pause.

The hole looked larger inside, and as his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom he could see that it sloped upward.

His curiosity was excited, and he determined to explore it further with a lantern.

When once he stood upright outside he found the tide had receded to a considerable extent.

That fact put him in mind of the clams he expected to find in the mud, so he deferred exploring the cavern until he had secured the shell fish.

Having dug up as many as he thought he could eat, he gathered some dried brushwood and bits of wreckage together, made a fire and roasted them.

They tasted uncommonly good under the circumstances and he didn't leave a single one.

Then he lighted the lantern which, with a box of matches, he had brought in the boat, and cautiously made his way over the slippery rocks to the yawning entrance, now fully exposed, of the sea cave.

Not the faintest whisper issued from it now.

The stillness of death reigned all about the little basin.

The only sound that could be heard anywhere was the rising and falling roll of the surf on the rocks outside.

Tom stooped under the archway of the rock and stepped inside.

Flashing the light of the lantern around, the reflection showed the cavern sloped sharply upward.

Carefully on his hands and knees, supporting himself by one hand, he crawled up the incline until the floor became level, and then he stood upright.

For a moment he halted there, trying to peer into the inky darkness.

He seemed to be looking into a wide, open space, the air of which was tainted by a peculiar odor.

Tom now began to entertain some doubts about going any further into the uncanny place.

However, he took a few more steps, paused again, and swung the lantern above his head.

Now he could see the wall of rock all about, and on the further side and close to the wall a huge, flat rock, upon which lay a pile of something that glittered in the lantern light.

"What's that?" breathed Tom, as he took a step forward to get a better look at it.

At that moment his eyes, now grown somewhat accustomed to the semi-darkness, rested on the floor formation near the flat stone, and he caught sight of two gruesome-looking objects, locked in a half-embrace, that caused him to give a gasp of horror.

The roots of his hair began to tingle, as though each individual one was beginning to rise and stiffen out.

In desperation he held the lantern forward at arm's length, and beheld, prostrate there beside the rock, two shriveled and blackened corpses.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOLD—GOLD—GOLD!

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom, as he gazed with horror on those two dead bodies reduced to skeletons in that dark cavern.

The position of the corpses, from whose bones the clothing hung in tatters, indicated that a tragedy had been enacted years before in the cave—a fatal quarrel, probably, between two strong and well-built men.

As if to remove any doubt on that head, a heavy, old-fashioned pistol and a long, wicked-looking knife, both thickly covered with rust, lay close beside them.

"Those two chaps evidently fought it out to a finish," breathed the startled boy. "That must have been fifty years ago, from the looks of them now. This sight is enough to give a fellow the nightmare for a week."

The impulse was strong on Tom to turn from the ghastly tableau and fly from the cave, and he was about to do so, when his eyes fell upon a score or more of tarnished pieces of metal resembling money that lay upon the floor.

A couple of them lay directly at his feet, and instinctively he stooped and picked them up.

Rubbing them on his trousers, Tom saw, with a thrill of satisfaction, that they were twenty-dollar gold pieces.

Dropping them into his pocket, he advanced another step and gathered up several more.

The greater part of the scattered coins lay under or behind the corpses, and the boy felt a natural repugnance to disturbing the ghastly remains.

Despite that, however, he hated to leave the money behind in the cave.

As he stood there undecided, swinging the lantern to and fro, his eyes once more lighted on the little heaps of glistening metal on the top of the flat stone.

"Gee whiz!" he breathed, as he raised the lantern above his head to get a better look, "I believe that's money, too—heaps of it."

The very thought of such a thing sent the blood coursing quicker through his veins.

And it must be all gold—golden double eagles—just think of it!

Here was wealth within his reach—probably thousands of dollars.

Tom drew a long, wistful breath as he gazed fascinated at the tarnished money.

The desire to possess it overcame his fear and disgust at the presence of the skeletons.

What will not a person dare to secure a golden hoard?

"There is money enough there to make mother, Ruth and I comfortable for life," he muttered, moistening his lips with the point of his tongue. "Why shouldn't I take it? Who has a better right to it than me? I have found it after it has lain neglected here all these years—goodness knows how many. It is clearly mine—all mine!"

Dashing forward, Tom thrust his hand into the tarnished mass.

He was standing above the skeletons now—so close that his trousers legs almost touched the grim bones; but he was no longer afraid or concerned about them.

It was the gold which fell ringing on the stone as his fingers displaced several of the piles that took up all of his thoughts.

He placed the lantern on the rock and with feverish eagerness began to grasp up double handfuls of the coins.

How they jingled! And rolled! And flashed in the lantern light when their heretofore unexposed surfaces turned over and seemed to laugh into his face.

Gold!

"Aye! Hundreds of pieces, with milled edges and sharply defined faces.

Five, ten and twenty dollar pieces—largely the latter.

Where had it all come from?

Who had accumulated such a quantity of American money?

And how had it been acquired?

Honestly or—and Tom glanced down at the skeletons.

Accidentally he moved one of his legs forward.

It struck the ribs of one of the corpses.

Instantly a strange thing happened.

The perfectly shaped skeletons crumbled into shapeless dust, leaving only a few shreds of moldy cloth, a handful or two of coarse hair, and several scattered teeth on the floor in the midst of the dust to show that the ghastly remains of two men had ever existed.

Tom was paralyzed for a moment at this sudden collapse of the dead; then he drew a breath of relief that they had vanished forever from his sight.

With his boot he gingerly knocked the dozen-odd coins away from contact with the dust of the dead men and greedily pocketed them.

Then he gave his attention once more to the piles of coin on the stone.

"How shall I take all this money away?" he asked himself.

He thought of the empty boxes in the schooner's store-room.

"I will get several of the smaller ones, fill them with the coin, and nail covers on them. That's what I'll do," he said eagerly.

Having decided on this course, Tom lost no time in putting it into execution.

Before leaving the cave, however, he filled every pocket with golden double eagles and then made his way down the declivity to the entrance.

He did not notice that the tide had turned and was rising once more—all he thought about was rowing off to the derelict and procuring the boxes to hold the fortune in money he had so strangely discovered.

Tom found several boxes that were small enough to be easily handled when full of coined money and he carried them on deck.

It was then he heard that strange bellowing sound again as the tide surged into the opening to the cavern.

He didn't think anything of it then, for the sound had lost all its terrors for him; but when he rowed to the patch of beach once more he saw to his disappointment that the entrance to the cave was rapidly being covered by the rising water.

"I can't get in there for several hours now," he said,

"unless I swam in, and then I couldn't get out again with any of the money until the tide went down once more. I'd rather amuse myself out here in the open air than be imprisoned in that ghostly place. There's no hurry, anyway, as I guess this island is very seldom visited. I think I'll see if I can get a few clams before the water gets too deep."

He managed to dig enough of the shellfish for a meal, and, starting a fire, cooked and ate them in connection with a package of crackers.

The gold pieces he had already brought out of the cave amounted to nearly one thousand dollars, all in twenty-dollar pieces of dates previous to 1860.

He passed away the time cleaning them of the tarnish which disuse and the salt atmosphere of the cavern had tinged them with in a greater or lesser degree.

He made a small package of this lot and placed it in the bow of the boat, beside the other bundle.

Then he devoted the larger part of the afternoon to walking over the island, or sitting on its most elevated part watching a number of fore-and-aft craft that passed up and down the coast.

When he returned to the shore of the basin he found the hole uncovered again and the tide rapidly falling.

He waited impatiently for the hole to widen so that he could wade in, and then, taking one of the boxes under his arm, he returned to the cave.

Everything looked just the same as when he had been in there before, and, without wasting a moment in counting the gold coin, he swept enough of it into the box to fill it, and, leaving the lantern behind him, made his way slowly and cautiously out into the open air again.

In this way he made eight trips in a short period of time, and the last time brought away the lantern.

"There must be all of fifty thousand or sixty thousand dollars in these boxes," he thought, as he gazed down upon them where they lay on the sand. "What a glorious find this has been! I can find it in my heart to forgive Buck Hawley and his crafty son for the injury they did me in Boston, since it has led me to the discovery of this fortune. Had I made my escape that morning with George Field I should in all probability be aboard the Polly Ann now on the way to a new fishing ground to face another siege of hard work for a half share's recompense. Strange how things work out in this world."

He had brought a hammer and nails ashore with him, and for the next twenty minutes he employed himself nailing the covers securely on the eight boxes.

Then he stowed them in the rowboat.

By that time it was after sundown, and Tom decided it would be foolish for him to leave the island that night.

So he dug up more clams, cooked and ate them with a great relish, for he was feeling like a bird.

After that he rowed the boat alongside the schooner, and took special care to tie her so there was very little chance of her floating away.

"I call this taking fortune on the wing," he said to him-

self, when he had got a pair of blankets on deck and lay down to sleep under the star-lit sky. "It was a lucky chance that carried me to this island. Mother will now be able to pay off the mortgage, and we shall have loads of money in the bank. I mean to have a fine schooner built and go into the coasting trade on my own hook. No more working for other people after this. I'll buy an interest in some good fishing schooner, too, if I get the chance, and have other people work for me. If father was only alive now he could retire from business and live on the fat of the land for the rest of his life. I wonder if Amy Wilson will be glad to hear of my good luck. One of these days I mean to——"

The words died drowsily upon his lips, his eyes closed, and he fell asleep to dream of caves filled to the ceiling with golden coins, and every bit of it all his own.

CHAPTER XV.

TOM LEAVES HORSESHOE ISLAND.

Tom awoke with the sun, and, finding that the tide was down, he rowed to the beach, dug up another mess of clams and made a breakfast of them.

"I shall never see a clam after this but it will put me in mind of this island with its treasure of golden coin. I'd give something to know who those two dead men were in their time, and how that money came to be in the cave. Looks as if they might have robbed a bank, or got the money in some other questionable way. They must have quarreled over the division of the spoils, then one of them stabbed the other mortally, and was in turn fatally shot. They died locked in a death grip, and so the money, however they came by it, did them no good. It's funny it should have remained all these years undiscovered in that cave. And yet I don't know that it is so remarkable, after all. This island, on account of the dangerous reefs, and the absence of any special object in landing here, is rarely visited, I guess. Then who would think of entering that hole under the rocks? If it wasn't that I felt a curiosity to find out just what made that bellowing noise I never would have investigated it myself. And, come to think of it, I didn't find out, after all. I guess I shan't bother with the subject now. I discovered a much better secret than that—a truly golden one—and so the cause which gives rise to the noise doesn't interest me any longer."

Tom had retained about three hundred dollars of the gold in his pocket to meet any emergency that might arise, and now, as the sea was smooth, he got out the oars and rowed away from Horseshoe Island, which had proved such a mine of wealth to him.

Two hours later he was off Narraguagus Bay.

After pulling up a mile or two he saw a small catboat anchored at the mouth of a creek.

There were a man and boy aboard engaged in fishing.

Tom pulled within hailing distance and inquired where he was.

They both looked at him in some surprise.

"Don't you know you're in Narraguagus Bay?" asked the man.

Tom shook his head.

"Where did you come from?"

"A waterlogged schooner that went ashore on an island out yonder."

"What island?"

"I don't know the name of it. I've never been so far down east before."

"What did the island look like?"

"A circular island with a small harbor inside," replied Tom.

"That's the Horseshoe," spoke up the boy.

The man nodded.

"Where's the rest of the schooner's people? On the island?"

"No. I was the only one aboard when she struck the island."

As the man seemed much interested in this statement, Tom pulled alongside and told how he had been carried off against his will from Boston aboard the English bark Wanderer; how the waterlogged schooner had been sighted late in the afternoon of the day but one previous; how he, the second mate and another seaman had been sent to board her; how a sudden squall had come up, followed by a fog, after he was on the derelict's deck, and he was separated from the boat, and, finally, how he had reached the island harbor, after drifting all night through the fog.

"You seem to have had a hard time of it," said the man.

"Oh, I'm not kicking," replied Tom, with a satisfied grin. "What's the nearest town I can strike?"

"The nearest town is Harrington, on the railroad. But it's ten miles from here—rather a hard pull for you. If you don't mind staying by us for a couple hours, I'll tow you up there. I'll lend you a line and you can help us fish."

Tom agreed to this friendly proposition, as he did not care to pull the ten miles under a warm sun unless obliged to do it.

It was about noon that the catboat got under way for town, and during the trip it occurred to the boy that if he could buy a good sailboat he would prefer to return to Gloucester by water, on account of the boxes of coin, which he wished to have under his own eye constantly, on account of their value, for it was possible some accident might happen to them if shipped by rail.

"Do you know whether I could buy or charter a sailboat in this neighborhood?" he asked the fisherman.

"Why, yes, there is a good boat that you could get if you had two hundred dollars in cash to pay for it. It's easily worth double that sum—in fact, I believe it originally cost about six hundred dollars. I am acquainted with the man who owns it, and who has been advertising it for sale. I'll take you around to his place, where you can see the boat and make the best bargain you can if, as I said, you have the money to pay down."

"I have the money," replied Tom, quietly, "and if the boat is worth the price asked I'll buy it."

Accordingly the fisherman put in at a small creek three miles below the town, and in a very short time Tom saw the sailboat moored alongside a small landing-place.

A bargain was finally struck between him and the owner, Tom getting possession of it for one hundred and eighty dollars, which he paid over in gold coin, much to the astonishment of the seller, who wanted to know where the boy got so much gold.

"That needn't worry you, sir," replied Tom, "so long as you are satisfied it is real American money. I came by it honestly, all right. I live in Glo'ster, and am going right back there by water in this boat."

"What have you got in those boxes?" asked the man, curiously.

"Well, if you want to know real bad, they're full of gold coin similar to what I have paid you for the boat," grinned Tom.

He said it in such a way as to give the impression that he was joking, though he was actually telling the truth.

As he supposed, and of course wished, the man did not believe any such nonsense as that, and so Tom wriggled out of what might have proved a serious predicament.

He obtained a bill of sale for the boat, made out in due form, and then, taking his rowboat in tow, followed his friend the fisherman on the catboat back to the mouth of the creek, where he parted from him, and laid a course down the bay toward the Atlantic.

Shortly afterward, seeing that he would pass close to a small island, he put in there and transferred his boxes and bundles to the cabin of his sailboat.

This was a great relief to him, for they were now out of sight and no longer likely to attract attention.

But he now suddenly awoke to the unpleasant fact that he was unprovided with anything to eat except the same old diet of crackers and the remains of the preserved ginger.

"Well," he said philosophically, "it won't do any harm to go on short commons until I can reach some place where I can lay in a stock of provisions. I wish I had a few bills, though, instead of all this gold. People seem to look at a twenty-dollar piece with suspicion, because it's so little in general circulation."

After leaving Narraguagus Bay he laid his course for a large island inshore to the southwest.

He met a fishing boat on his way and obtained a couple of fine, fat mackerel, likewise the information that there was a small hamlet on the inner shore of the island in question.

He sailed around the island till he came to a wharf, where he moored his boat.

Then he went up to a general store he saw there and bought several dollars' worth of supplies—enough, he calculated, to keep him until he reached his home—tendering a ten-dollar piece in payment.

"Haven't you got any bills?" asked the storekeeper, looking at the coin doubtfully; not that he doubted its genuineness, but he was loath to have the coin around his drawer, for fear he might lose or mislay it.

"No," replied the boy; "that's the best I can do with you."

The man accepted it reluctantly, and handed Tom the right change.

After sailing seaward till he reached the outer and uninhabited part of the island, he hauled in ashore again, made a fire on the beach and cooked one of the mackerel for his supper.

As he now had fresh bread, butter, and various other adjuncts, he made a very satisfactory meal—the first real good one he had enjoyed since fate separated him from the Polly Ann.

He then continued his course along the coast to the southwestward under jib and mainsail.

As it grew dark he approached one of the innumerable small islands that dot the shores of Maine.

Not having any knowledge of the navigation of this stretch of water, and fearing he might blunder on some reef or hidden ledge in the dark, Tom resolved to anchor all night under the lee of this island.

He found a little cove, into which he ran, and, dropping the anchor and lowering his canvas, he felt pretty secure until morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAVE HAWLEY'S AUDACIOUS ACT.

A week later Tom Whitney sighted Cape Ann, and in a few hours he rounded Eastern Point and headed up toward Gloucester harbor.

He had hugged the shore as closely as he dared all the way up from Narraguagus Bay, and, having encountered several spells of uncommonly rough weather, had been obliged to lie at anchor at various sheltered spots along his route.

Tom was mighty glad to get within sight of home at last.

He did not believe that Captain Kedge had had a chance yet to notify his mother of his mysterious disappearance at Boston, because the Polly Ann had scarcely had time to return from her second trip to the mackerel grounds.

On the whole, he had enjoyed his experiences since he struck Horseshoe Island, especially after he had come into possession of the treasure of the cavern.

The sailboat had proved herself everything her former owner had claimed for her, and Tom was well satisfied with his bargain.

It was a warm, sunshiny afternoon, and a stiff breeze was blowing up the bay.

The Sunday-school Tom attended was having a picnic on an island near the mouth of the harbor.

The steamer that had brought the party down in the morning was tied up at a small wharf on the lee of the island, while the young people, with their teachers and friends, were scattered all over the place.

Amy Wilson and Ruth Whitney had both come to the picnic; so, also, had Dave Hawley.

Young Hawley had come down in a catboat with a crony

of his, and had tried, with poor success, to square himself with Amy.

About the time that Tom had rounded the cape, several miles below, Hawley and his chum were sailing around the picnic ground in the catboat.

Dave was in bad humor on account of the rebuffs he had got from the girl he was sweet on, and was meditating revenge upon her.

They were circling the southern shore of the island, when his companion called his attention to two girls who were picking flowers just back of the beach.

The girls had strayed away from the rest of the picnickers, and Hawley recognized them at once as Amy Wilson and Ruth Whitney.

His lobster-like eyes snapped maliciously when he saw they were quite alone.

An audacious scheme suggested itself to him.

Amy had persistently refused all his proposals to sail in the boat with him.

Here was a chance to make her go with him, whether she would or not.

"Say," he grinned to his crony, "suppose we put in to the beach and make them two girls come out with us down the bay a bit. I heard you say you liked Ruth Whitney, but that she gave you the icy mitt; now here's a chance to get back at her. I've been aching for a chance to get square with Amy Wilson, and here it is all cut and dried for me to take advantage of. Are you game to do this?"

His friend, whose name was Perley Moore, hesitated as he thought of the possible consequences of running off with two girls against their will even for an hour or two, but finally agreed to take a hand in the project.

Dave immediately headed the catboat for the beach, landing under a low bluff where the preoccupied girls could not see them.

"We'll wait here, Perley," said Dave, hiding behind the bushes; "they're coming this way. When I give the word we'll pounce upon them, run them down to the boat and push off before they have a chance to put up much of a kick. It will be great fun—for us, at any rate. I'll have the satisfaction of making Amy take a sail with me. They'll both have to make the best of it until we choose to land them."

"Where shall we take them?"

"A mile or so down the bay. If they get too cranky over the matter we'll take them all the way back to town in the boat instead of landing them at the island."

"They'll be awful mad, I'll bet," replied Perley.

"I don't care how mad they get. They won't be able to help themselves. Once we get them in the boat we'll run things to suit ourselves."

The two young rascals waited impatiently until Amy and Ruth had got within a few feet of them, when they sprang out and seized them.

The girls screamed and attempted to run, but they hadn't a ghost of a show to get away.

Before they had recovered from their consternation they

were bundled aboard the catboat, the painter cast off and the craft headed down the bay.

"Now will you be good, Amy Wilson?" chuckled Dave, gleefully.

"How dare you treat us in this way!" exclaimed Amy, indignantly, as soon as she found her voice. "Take us back to the shore," she demanded, with a stamp of her little foot.

"We will not," replied her persecutor. "You're going for a sail with us."

"We don't want to go sailing," protested Amy, with a flushed face.

"You're only pretending you don't," snickered Dave, feeling, now that the island was dropping behind, that he was master of the situation.

"You're a bad, disagreeable boy!" replied Amy. "I shall tell my father when he comes home, and he will have your father punish you for this."

"My dad won't do a thing to me," retorted Dave. "Come, now, why can't you treat a fellow decently?"

"I don't want anything to do with you. I hate you, so there!" cried Amy, with tears of resentment welling in her pretty eyes.

"Ho! That won't do you any good."

"Wait till Tom Whitney gets back. He'll make you dance for treating his sister in this way."

"I'm not afraid of his gettin' back in a hurry," replied Dave, so significantly that both Amy and Ruth looked at him in surprise.

"What do you mean?" asked Amy.

"Oh, you're interested now, are you?" answered Dave, with a jealous note in his voice. "You'd like to see Tom Whitney, wouldn't you? Like to go out sailin' with him instead of me? Well, you won't see him again for a good while. He's gone to Europe for his health," and the young rascal laughed derisively, as if something tickled him very much, indeed.

"What does he mean, Amy?" whispered Ruth, uneasily.

"Oh, he's just trying to worry us about nothing," replied her chum, with a curl of her lip.

"Am I?" sneered Dave, who had overheard her. "Just keep on thinkin' so. I was at Boston last week when the Polly Ann put in there to sell her fish. The day she hauled in to the wharf to take on ice Tom Whitney disappeared. I wouldn't be surprised if he had been knocked down along the wharves by some of those water toughs. If they didn't toss him into the bay, after robbin' him, they put him aboard some foreign vessel bound out to sea. Such things are done all the time."

The way Dave uttered the foregoing remarks almost convinced the two girls that something had happened to Tom.

Ruth turned white with fear, while Amy's heart stood still for a moment with a secret apprehension.

"You know you're not telling the truth, David Hawley," she cried earnestly. "You are just tantalizing us—trying to worry Ruth here. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Dave snickered.

"Well, wait till the Polly Ann gets back to either Boston or Glo'ster, and then see if he's aboard of her. If he is, I'm a liar, and I'll agree never to bother you any more, if you don't want me to."

"Oh, Amy, do you think anything has happened to Tom?" asked Ruth, tearfully.

"No, I don't," replied Amy. "I don't believe a word this boy says. He's down on your brother because——"

Then she stopped, slightly embarrassed, for she easily guessed why Dave Hawley hated Tom Whitney.

Hawley laughed jeeringly and nodded his head significantly.

If the young rascal had known that the sailboat he saw right ahead coming up the bay was sailed by the boy they were talking about he would have hauled in his horns a bit, as the saying is, turned the catboat about and made back for the island as fast as he could go—a much surprised and disconcerted lad.

How could he even guess such a thing, when he had received the assurance of the Boston sailors' lodging-house keeper, the man with the foghorn voice, that Tom Whitney had been shipped in a drugged condition aboard the British bark Wanderer and was on his way to Cardiff, Wales?

"Are you going to take us back to the island, David Hawley?" asked Amy again.

"Sure, if you behave yourselves."

"If we behave ourselves! I like that!" replied Amy, indignantly. "I request that you turn back at once. If you don't——"

"If I don't, what then?" asked Dave, mockingly.

"You'll regret it."

"I don't think I will," replied Dave, incredulously. "Who's goin' to touch me for just givin' you girls a pleasant sail down the bay?"

"You've carried us away from the island against our wills?" protested Amy.

"Oh, forget it. A sail will do you good. When we get good and ready we'll carry you back and land you at the steamboat wharf."

Amy saw it was useless to argue with him.

He was the boss of the situation; they were a mile from the island, and he was evidently bent on having his own way, so she said nothing more.

For fifteen minutes the catboat kept on its way, the wind seeming to grow stronger every moment.

The bay was full of whitecaps, that leaped over the bow of the boat and flung spray into their faces.

Amy and Ruth, knowing nothing of Hawley's ability to manage the craft, began to grow more and more disquieted as the catboat careened further over under the wind.

"I wish you'd turn back, Dave Hawley," Amy said at length, in a tone of some concern. "It's getting very rough. If this boat should upset out here we'd all be drowned."

"Don't you worry. It won't upset," replied Dave, confidently. "However, I'm willin' to go back, as I guess we've gone for enough."

He spoke to Perley, and then moved the tiller to come about.

Duck your heads, girls, and then jump over to the other side."

Amy ducked and made a spring for the other side.

As she did so a sharp flaw struck the sail, tore the sheet attached to the boom out of Dave's hand, and away went the spar to leeward out of his reach.

The catboat careened suddenly and then righted in the trough of the waves.

If nothing more serious than that had happened all might have gone well, for by bringing the boat up into the wind Hawley could have coaxed the boom aboard again and secured it.

It happened, however, that when the catboat careened Amy lost her balance and in the twinkling of an eye went overboard.

Her shrill scream was heard by Tom Whitney, whose sailboat was only a short distance away at the moment, and who happened to be watching the catboat to try and make out who were aboard of her.

In a moment he sprang to his feet in great excitement.

"One of those girls has gone overboard," he cried, turning his boat's head in the direction where the accident had happened. "I must save her."

He bore down on the spot where Amy had disappeared, at the same time grabbing up a line to throw to her.

Presently he saw her head appear above the surface a short distance away.

He threw the coiled rope at her as straight as a die, and then seized a boathook.

The line fell about Amy's head, and she instinctively caught hold of it.

Tom threw the boat into the wind and then pulled in on the rope, drawing the unfortunate girl up to the side of the boat, when he reached down with both hands and pulled her into the cockpit.

"Amy Wilson!" he cried, as he recognized her.

"Tom!" she gasped, and then sank back exhausted in his arms.

By this time Dave Hawley had recovered the boom and had thrown his boat into the wind, too.

As the two craft came almost together Tom recognized his sister as well as the two boys in the catboat.

He was astonished beyond measure to find Amy and his sister in such company.

At the same time Hawley was amazed to behold the boy he supposed to be far away at sea by that time.

"Ruth!" cried Tom.

"Oh, Tom!" exclaimed his sister; "is that you? Take me aboard."

"Sure I will," and he did in short order, without exchanging a word with his enemy.

The two boats then fell apart.

"Look after Amy, Ruth," said Tom, deferring an explanation for the present. "You can take her into the

cabin. Get off her wet clothes and put her in one of the bunks. That may prevent her from catching cold."

Before the sailboat got abreast of the island where the picnic party was Ruth came out of the cabin, after attending to Amy, and told Tom the story of how Dave Hawley had treated them.

Her brother was pretty mad and threatened to haul Dave over the coals.

Then he had a long story to tell Ruth about his adventures since leaving home, which was hardly finished by the time he ran alongside a wharf at the town.

Ruth hurried to Amy's home for dry clothes for her chum, and when Amy was once more dressed she couldn't thank Tom enough for saving her life.

"Don't say any more, Amy," he replied, in a happy tone. "I'm only too glad I was on hand to render you this service."

Tom sent the girls home, hired a cart and had his boxes of treasure carried to his house, where he was received with open arms by his astonished mother.

He told his story more completely at the tea table, and when the contents of the boxes were revealed his mother and sister could scarcely believe their eyes.

A week later, when the Polly Ann anchored in the harbor, and Captain Kedge came ashore to break the news of her son's disappearance to Mrs. Whitney, almost the first person he ran across was Tom himself, looking as swell as a nabob's heir.

The news soon circulated through Gloucester that the Whitneys had received a legacy, for they sold the humble cottage and went to live in a much more pretentious one, where they had every comfort they could wish for.

Tom bought a fine schooner and went into the coasting trade on his own hook.

He was successful from the start, and was regarded as one of Gloucester's rising young citizens.

In the course of three years he married Amy Wilson, which happy event took place last June.

He did not prosecute Buck Hawley nor his graceless son for the part they played in his abduction from Boston, largely because their rascality had opened the door of wealth to him, enabling him to take FORTUNE ON THE WING.

THE END.

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